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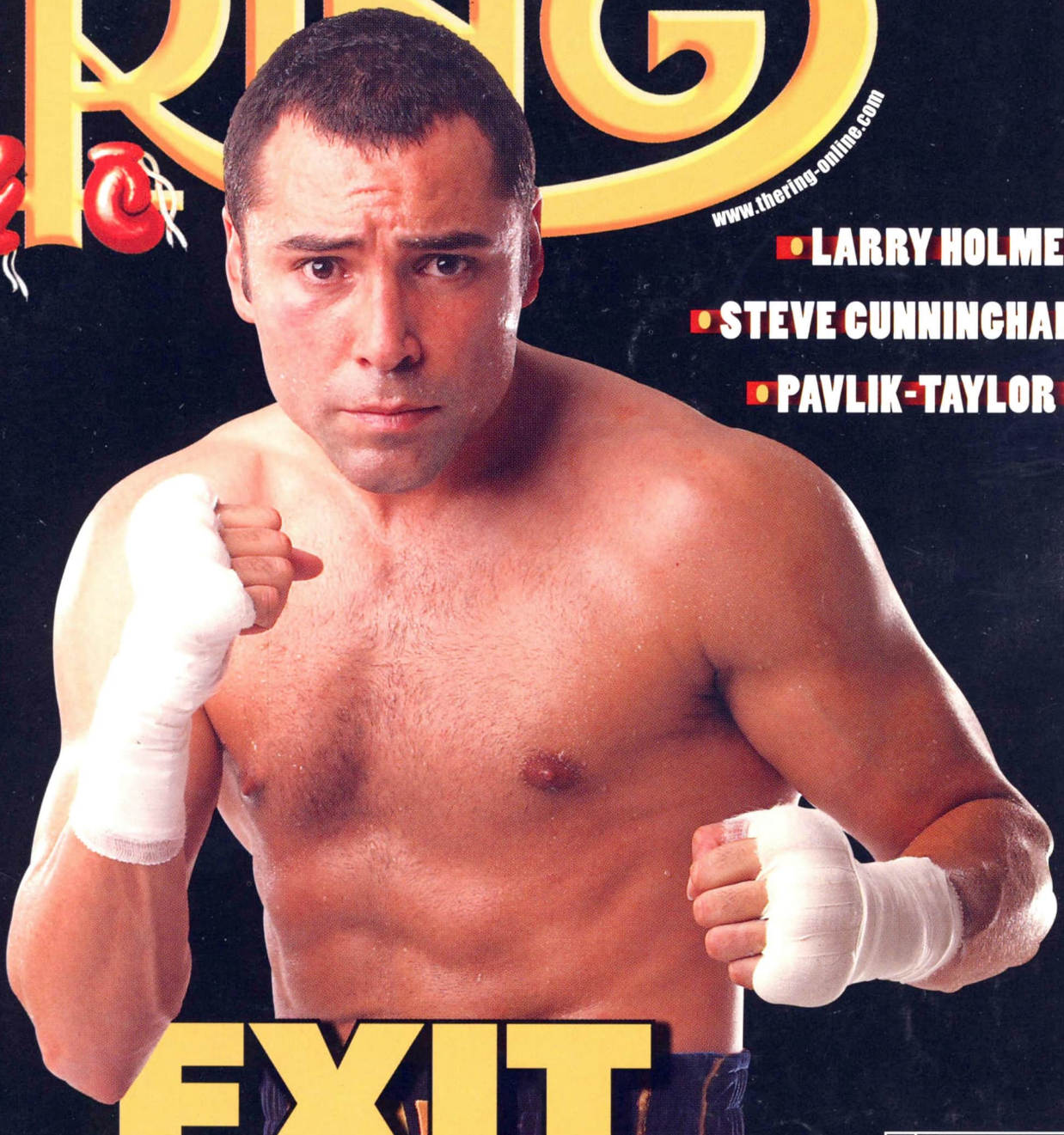

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Volume 87, No. 7 June 2008

The RING

Anarchy & Capitalism: Boxing's Winning Combination

Some fans and media members are unhappy that light heavyweight champion Bernard Hopkins is fighting super middleweight champion Joe Calzaghe, instead of taking on one of his top challengers in the 175-pound division. The critics would prefer Hopkins fight Chad Dawson or Zsolt Erdei, two undefeated contenders who also hold alphabet belts. And while THE RING would certainly welcome a Hopkins-Dawson or Hopkins-Erdei match, I believe Hopkins made the right choice by fighting Calzaghe not only for himself, but also for boxing.

Unlike other sports that are bound by rigid rules that mandate certain teams or athletes have to compete against each other, boxing is free of such constraints. Boxing doesn't have to endure a Colorado Rockies-Boston Red Sox World Series, where one of the teams is from a small market that most of the country doesn't care about. When properly utilized, boxing's anarchic structure can work in the sport's favor, simply because it allows boxing to make the matches that will generate the most money. And right now, in the light heavyweight division, that's Hopkins-Calzaghe.

True, fighters such as Dawson and Erdei are worthy challengers who, from a sporting perspective, deserve a crack at the real championship. But the number of boxing consumers willing pay to see either of them fight Hopkins is significantly smaller than those who would pay to see Hopkins-Calzaghe.

Why shouldn't the fans, the people who pay for *everything*, get what the majority of them want? We don't force people to buy a Chevy if they want a Ford. Why try to shove a Hopkins-Dawson fight down people's throats when most of them really want Hopkins-Calzaghe?

Some would say that this philosophy puts business ahead of sport, and they would be correct. Anybody who thinks that boxing isn't a business first and a sport second hasn't been paying attention. And in the free-enterprise system, where the customer is always right, that's not necessarily a bad thing.

So where does this leave guys such as Dawson and Erdei? Is there no way for deserving fighters with modest box-office appeal to get the fights they want?

It's instructive to look at a similar situation in the welterweight division, where champion Floyd Mayweather is scheduled to box a rematch with Oscar De La Hoya in September. As in the Hopkins-Calzaghe case, there are people who would much rather see Mayweather defend against his number-one contender, Miguel Cotto. The big difference is that the number of people who would rather see Mayweather-Cotto is far greater than those who want to see Hopkins-Dawson—and growing every day.

At the moment, Mayweather-De La Hoya is still bigger than Mayweather-Cotto, but the gap is closing quickly, and providing Cotto continues to perform well, the public's demand for a match with Mayweather (or whoever holds the welterweight championship) will grow to the point where it will happen. It will happen not because it makes sporting sense (which it already does), but because the market is ripe for the match.

The alternative to allowing the marketplace to make the big fights is allowing the alphabet organizations to do it, and we all know what happens then: a boatload of undeserving, mandatory challengers in title fights hardly anybody wants to see.

Why not let the most basic rules of commerce prevail instead? Although some of our best fighters were involved, boxing's big comeback in 2007 wasn't really predicated on the best fighting the best—the real secret was giving people what they wanted. It works every time.

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Opening Shot

The Look Of A Winner?

John Duddy (believe it or not!) received the nod (unanimously, at that!) against the man at the other end of this left, Walid Smichet of Argentina. While Duddy walked out of the ring (under his own power!) with his undefeated record intact, he possibly lost something more important … his big-bucks chance at middleweight champ Kelly Pavlik. Of course, if a fighter like Smichet could do this to his face, perhaps Duddy should be grateful that he didn't have to get in the ring with Pavlik.

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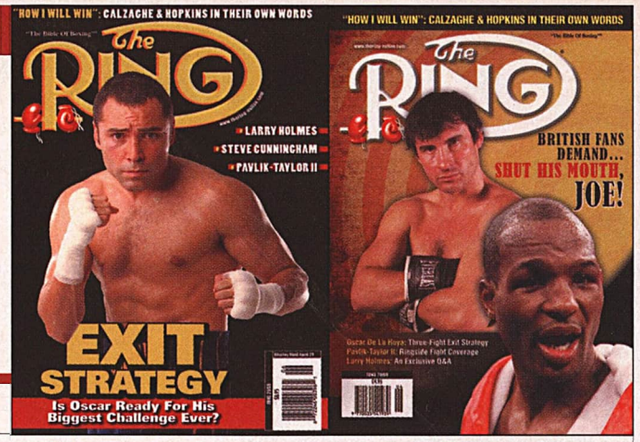

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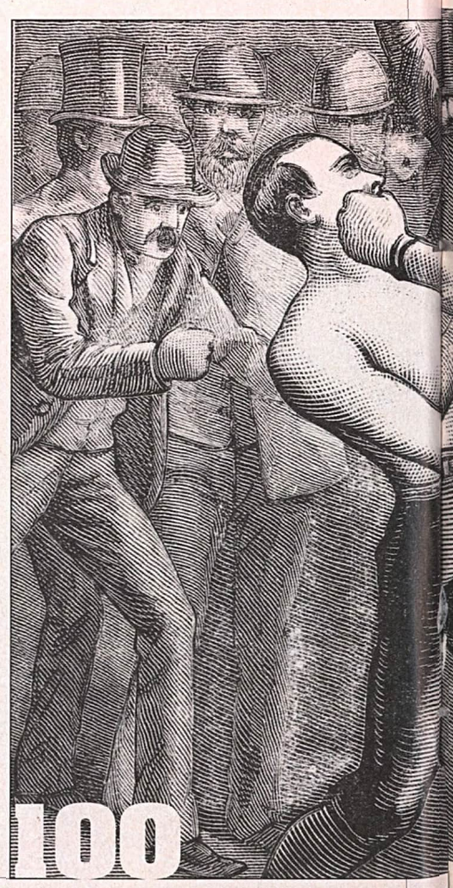

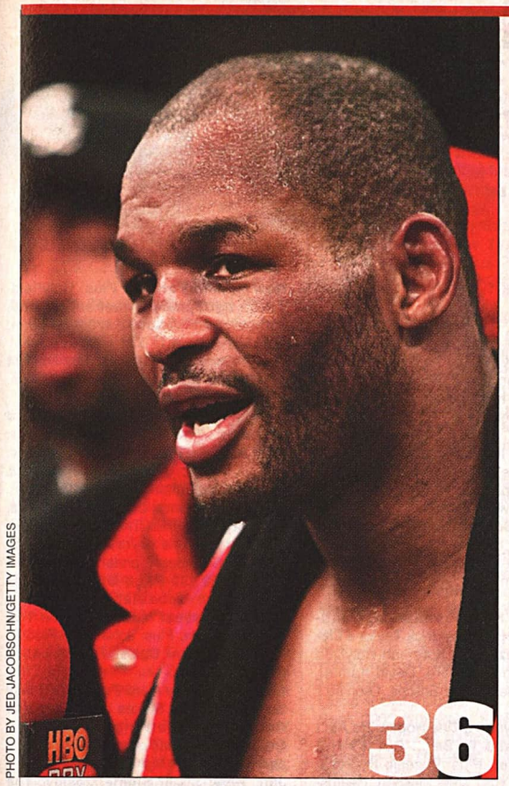

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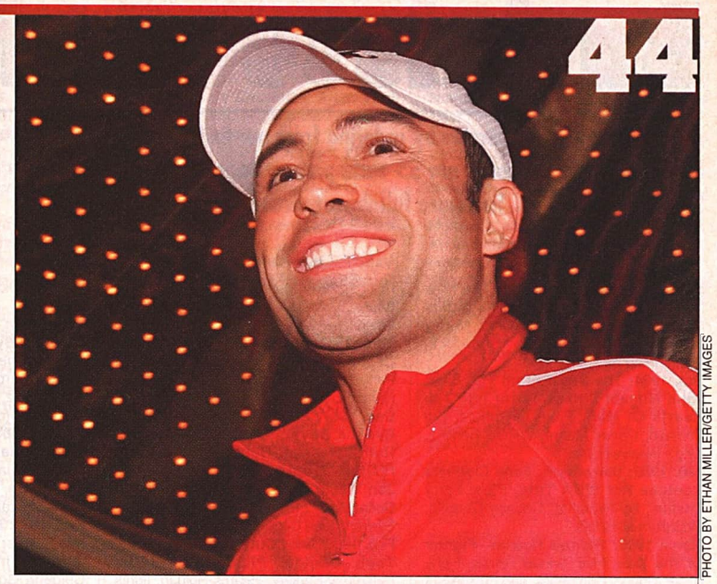

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Oct. 2005 (100-Page Extra): Our Man Hatton—Working-Class Warrior Becomes A World-Class Superstar. Plus: Wright-Trinidad, Corrales-Castillo, Kingsley Ikeke, great career comebacks, featherweights.

Dec. 2005 (100-Page Extra): Jermain Taylor: Can We Call Him The World's Greatest Middleweight? Plus: Corrales-Castillo II forecast, Amir Khan, Barry McGuigan, The Ring 100.

Fall 2005: Jeff "Left Hook" Lacy: Bringing Excitement Back To The Super Middles. Plus: Fernando Vargas, Rahman-Klitschko, Taylor-Hopkins, boxing pitchmen.

Feb. 2006 (100-Page Extra): Castillo-Corrales II: When The Rule-Breakers Win ... It's Time To Reevaluate The System. Plus: Antonio Tarver, Cotto-Torres, Peter-Klitschko, Marco Antonio Barrera, Zahir Raheem, Leavander Johnson, Max Baer.

April 2006 (100-Page Extra): Ricky Hatton: Britain's First Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Year-end awards, Jermain Taylor, Calzaghe-Lacy preview, Israel Vazquez, Zsolt Erdei.

June 2006 (100-Page Extra): Who Needs The Heavyweights? Plus: De La Hoya-Mayorga preview, Pacquiao-Morales, Carlos Baldomir, Castillo-Reyes, Alvin Felicilda, Jason Litzau, Turpin brothers.

Aug. 2006 (100-Page Extra): No Gimme For Gatti: Baldomir Has More Than A Fat Chance. Plus: Floyd Mayweather, Arce-Alvarez, Mosley-Vargas II preview, Frank Warren, Native American casinos, heavyweights.

Oct. 2006 (100-Page Extra): One Final Fight For Oscar: The Ring Answers The Vital Questions About De La Hoya-Mayweather. Also: Hasim Rahman, Marco Antonio Barrera, 2004 Olympians, Robbie Sims, Cotto-Malignaggi.

Dec. 2006 (100-Page Extra): Taking The World By Force: "Pretty Boy" Floyd Guns For Baldomir. Also: Oleg Maskaev, Roy Jones, Nino-Viloria, Battling Siki, Argentine fighters.

Feb. 2007 (100-Page Extra): Nicolay Valuev: The Good, The Bad, And The Ugly. Also: Joel Casamayor, Ricky Hatton, The Mosleys, Sugar-Sugar-Oscar, Len Matthews.

April 2007 (100-Page Extra): Manny Pacquiao—Fighter Of The Year. Also: Year-end awards, Jermain Taylor, Roberto Duran, Willie Pep, Ring Ratings Advisory Panel, fighting overseas.

June 2007 (100-Page Extra): 25-Page Special Section: Golden Boy vs. Pretty Boy—The World Awaits. Also: Shane Mosley, Chad Dawson, Kelly Pavlik, Pernell Whitaker.

Aug. 2007 (100-Page Extra): De La Hoya vs. Mayweather—Questions Answered ... Questions Raised. Also: Manny Pacquiao, John Duddy, Chagaev-Valuev, Calzaghe-Kessler, Wright-Hopkins.

Oct. 2007 (100-Page Extra): Cotto On The Verge of Greatness ... But Is It Too Soon To Fight Floyd? Also: Vitali Klitschko, Rafael Marquez, Kelly Pavlick, David Haye, Jimmy Carter.

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Double Trouble In Maryland

You see a lot of bizarre things inside of a boxing ring, but what happened January 31 at the "Ballroom Boxing" club show in the Baltimore suburb of Glen Burnie, Maryland, might have been unprecedented—a double disqualification before the bout even started!

After entering the ring and before the introductions took place, heavyweight Jonathan Felton, Stafford, Virginia, walked over to the corner of his opponent, Baltimore's Askia Schneider, and promptly stuck his face near Schneider's, talking trash and inviting a staredown. Schneider's trainer, Bill Ayers, took exception to Felton's behavior, and told him in no uncertain terms to get back to his own corner. Felton responded by pushing Ayers, a move that prompted Schneider to throw a punch at Felton.

Next, both fighters grabbed each other and wrestled to the canvas, with Ayers falling on top of them. Security quickly separated the two as the crowd went wild with disbelief. Referee Gary Camponeschi immediately disqualified both fighters, and security led them to their dressing rooms, though the enraged Felton did not go quietly.

"I was tying Askia's shoe and Felton comes over trying to talk smack," said Ayers. "When Felton pushed me, Askia was just trying to help me when he threw the punch. We don't know what Felton's problem is. He should have saved that anger for the fight itself."

Promoter Scott Wagner withheld both fighters' purses, and Maryland State Athletic Commission Executive Director Patrick Panella suspended both boxers indefinitely, pending an investigation.

"The referee disqualified both fighters due to unruly conduct and interference with a commission official," said Panella. "We'll look at the tape of the incident to see exactly what transpired, so we can determine what fines and/or suspensions will be appropriate. I'm sure my five commission members will perform their due diligence on this case."

If Felton and Schneider ever meet again in the ring, they may need a line of security to separate, a la Lennox Lewis-Mike Tyson in Memphis. Otherwise, fans may end up going to a fight, only to see a fight break out.

—Mike Greenhill

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Unscheduled brawl at "Ballroom Boxing"

The Ring Belt Steals The Show

The plush Condado Caribe Hilton was the venue for the Puerto Rican Boxing Commission's annual awards banquet, and for the first time since the inception of the awards, two boxers shared Fighter of the Year honors—WBA welterweight titleholder Miguel Cotto and world junior flyweight champion Ivan Calderon.

According to Mario Rivera, who has represented The Ring in Puerto Rico since the late-1940s, the highlight of the gala affair was the presentation of The Ring championship belt to Calderon, who won the 108-pound title by outpointing Hugo Cazares on August 25, 2007. The 33-year-old Calderon made his first defense on December 1, winning a 12-round decision over Juan Esquer, which was the undefeated "Iron Boy's" 30th consecutive victory.

"Caderon had been asking me when he was going to get his Ring belt for several months now," said Rivera, "and he was the happiest individual at the banquet when I gave him his belt. He was very expressive in his gratitude."

Calderon is the only Puerto Rican boxer to win a Ring belt since the magazine launched its Championship Policy in 2002. Cotto would very much like to become the second, but first he'll have to get a match with 147-pound champion Floyd Mayweather, who is proving just as evasive when it comes to defending against his number-one contender as he is ducking punches inside a boxing ring.

PHOTO BY NORM NIEVES

Rivera belts Calderon, as Puerto Rican boxing commissioner "Toto" Penagricano looks on

Ralph Dupas, 1935-2008

Ralph Dupas was 14 year old when he had his first professional fight. At 17, he was the third-ranked lightweight in the world, and when the classy boxer known in his hometown of New Orleans as "The Native Dancer" became the WBA's second junior middleweight titleholder, on April 29, 1963, it was Dupas' 100th victory in the ring.

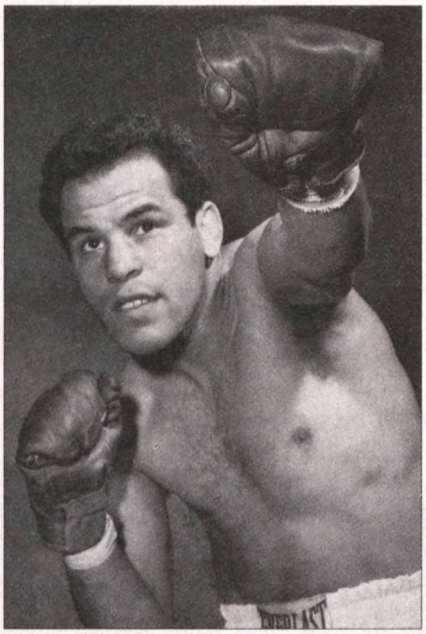
Like so many fighters, Dupas stayed in the game too long. When he died on January 25 at age 72, Dupas, 104-23-6 (19), had lived in a nursing home for 12 years, his memory mostly gone.

Before he won the 154-pound title from Denny Moyer, Dupas lost challenges for the world lightweight and welterweight belts. He successfully defended the junior middleweight crown against Moyer in a rematch before losing it on September 7, 1963, to Italy's Sandro Mazzinghi.

In his 16-year career, Dupas fought many of the best fighters from 135-160 pounds, including Paddy DeMarco, Joe Brown, Emile Griffith, Joey Giardello, and Sugar Ray Robinson. But the fight that caused more headlines than any of those took place in a courtroom in 1957.

Dupas was scheduled to fight welterweight contender Vince Martinez in New Orleans when the state boxing commission stepped in to investigate allegations that the bout would violate Louisiana's ban on mixed-race matches, asserting that Dupas was black. The fighter strenuously denied it. "I'm white, and don't know why I have to prove it," complained Dupas at a bizarre two-day hearing. His official accuser, a 74-year-old schoolteacher named Lucretia Gravolet, shouted at him, "I know you are a Negro. Now put me in jail if you don't like it." Another schoolteacher, Dupas supporter Rose Neil Tomeny, called the charges "nothing but cruel sadism" and lamented that "it only takes a little mud to ruin a masterpiece."

According to Tony Dupas, Ralph's brother, Gravolet was acting at the behest of local mobsters upset because Ralph refused to ditch manager Whitey Esneault and throw in with them.



Former junior welterweight champion Dupas in his prime

What the media dubbed the "Race Furor Bout" went on as scheduled, and Dupas won a 10-round decision. (Seven months later, a judge ruled that it had not been "established beyond reasonable doubt that [Dupas], a man who has been commonly accepted as Caucasian, is in fact of colored ancestry ... ")

That was the only personal controversy involving the fighter whose trainer, Angelo Dundee, called "the nicest human being God ever put on this earth." In the ring, Dundee said, he was "a great boxer who could give anybody a bad time. He was like a jumping bean, in and out with amazing quickness." Anyway you color it, Dupas merited his induction into the World Boxing Hall of Fame in 2000.

—Pete Ehrmann

TV Fights of the Month

Compiled By Martin Mulcahey

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
1/25/08	Juan Velasquez KO 4 Noe Inzunza	Telefutura	f	C-	C	C
	Twin brother Juan sets high standard for the duo's TV debut					
1/25/08	Carlos Velasquez KO 1 Ever Perez	Telefutura	jl	C-	C	B-
	Proof that one twin can look better then the other					
1/25/08	Hugo Cazares W 10 Kermin Guardia	Telefutura	jfl	B-	C+	C+
	Guardia slides into opponent bracket with loss					
1/26/08	Alexander Povetkin W 12 Eddie Chambers	HBO	h	B	A-	C+
	Ten sloppy connects beats two artful counters					
2/01/08	Mario Santiago KO 1 Edel Ruiz	Telefutura	f	C	C-	B
	That must be what Fitzsimmons famed solar plexus punch looked like					
2/01/08	Henry Bruseles KO 4 Robert Frankel	Telefutura	jw	C+	C	C
	Those cuts were of Klitschkonian proportions					
2/01/08	Brian Camechis W 8 Doel Carrasquillo	ESPN2	w	C	C	C
	A sucker for the uppercut should not be undefeated					
2/01/08	Monty Meza Clay KO 7 Eric Aiken	ESPN2	l	B-	B-	B-
	Meza Clay can make a living as a Sharmba Mitchell impersonator					
2/01/08	Mickey Bey W 8 Roberto Acevedo	Showtime	l	C-	C	C-
	Counterpuncher wins despite lack of offensive imagination					
2/01/08	Alfredo Angulo KO 1 Ricardo Cortes	Showtime	jm	C+	B	B-
	Who is the angrier junior middle prospect, Angulo or James Kirkland?					
2/07/08	Vanes Martirosyan KO 3 Michi Munoz	Versus	jm	C+	C+	C+
	Vanes fired every punch in his arsenal in less than nine minutes					
2/07/08	Kendall Holt W 10 Ben Tackie	Versus	jw	B-	C	D
	The surest bet in all of Vegas is Tackie lasting the distance					
2/08/08	Jeffrey Resto W 8 Humberto Tapia	Telefutura	w	C-	C	B-
	Close fight with hometown boy getting the nod					
2/08/08	Antonio Escalante W 10 Jose Beranza	Telefutura	jf	C	C	C
	Youngster rebounding well from shock loss to Mauricio Pastrana					
2/08/08	Dhafir Smith W 8 Rayco Saunders	ESPN2	lh	D	C-	C+
	Local journeymen serve up a seesaw fight in ESPN opener					
2/08/08	B.J. Flores W 12 Darnell Wilson	ESPN2	c	B-	B	C-
	Mover cools off the cruiserweights' hottest slugger					
2/09/08	Bernabe Concepcion W 12 Juan Ruiz	PPV	jf	B-	C+	C+
	Two graduates of the Fritzie Zivic School of Dirty Tactics					
2/09/08	Marco Antonio Rubio KO 7 Jose Luis Zertuche	PPV	m	B-	B	C+
	Rubio advances from this crash at the crossroads					
2/09/08	Edgar Sosa W 12 Jesus Iribe	PPV	jfl	A-	C-	C
	The fourth title defense in seven months for Sosa!					
2/09/08	Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. KO 8 Jose Celaya	PPV	jm	B-	C	C
	"I just wasn't myself," says Chavez Jr.					
2/09/08	Andre Berto KO 6 Michel Trabant	HBO	w	B-	C+	C-
	German comes to America and gets blitzed					
2/09/08	Carlos Quintana W 12 Paul Williams	HBO	w	A	B+	A-
	Guerrilla warfare—timing and movement defeats a superior force					

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective

(RING championship fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

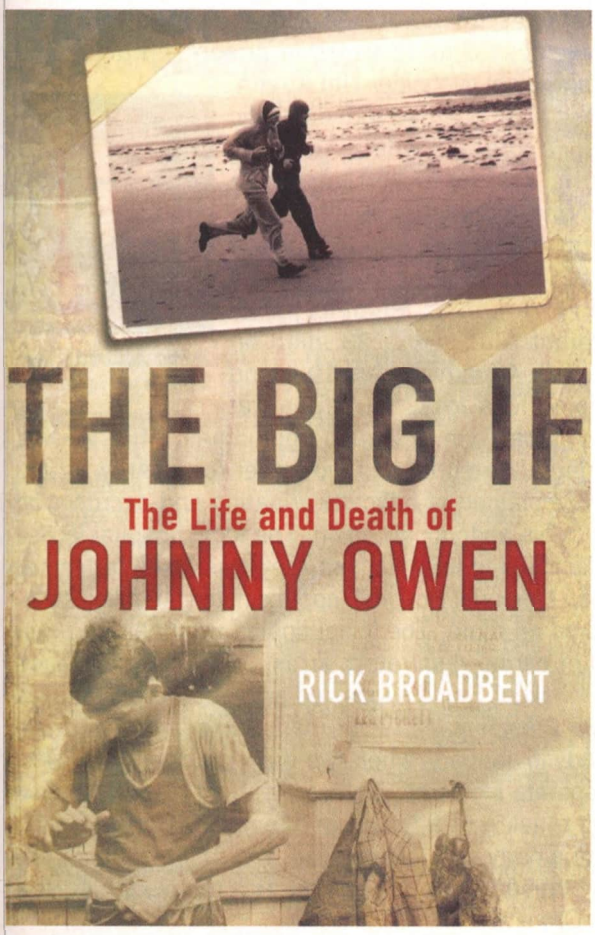
Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox Sports Net; Uni—Univision; Telef—Telefutura; Telem—Telemundo

Boxing Bookshelf

Johnny Owen came from a tiny community in Wales where life was hard, and fighters were idolized. Fittingly for a man who had never kissed a girl, Owen's dreams were modest: He wanted to make enough money to buy a small hotel. Had he never boxed, the best he could've hoped for was a factory job where he'd be lucky to retire with all of his fingers. Lupe Pintor was from Mexico City, where fighters were idolized and life was cheap. Pintor's father used to beat him with a machete and steal the money Pintor made selling ice on the streets. Pintor boxed so he could be part of something bigger than the dark psychodrama playing out at home. Rick Broadbent's excellent new book, *The Big If: The Life And Death Of Johnny Owen* (Macmillan Books, hardback, 337 pages, £16.99) details the careers of both fighters, leading up to their 1980 meeting that resulted in Owen's death.

Everything about the fight had an aura of malevolence, from Owen's skeletal physique, to referee Marty Denkin's failure to stop the fight, to the ignorant behavior of Pintor's Mexican fans (they urinated in cups and pelted Owen as he was carted away on a gurney). The bout's aftermath was also dank: Owen remained on life support for five weeks as his family worried, while reporters and boxing people circled the hospital like vultures.

The book defuses the lingering legend that Owen wasn't worthy of facing Pintor. The lanky Welshman was certainly fit enough to challenge for Pintor's WBC title, and held his own for the first half of the bout. It was only an abnormality in Owen's bone structure that caused his skull to crack during the fight. As for Pintor, Broadbent reveals him to be a thoughtful man who sees the world as a harsh but wonderful place. When Pintor confides that he would have "loved to die in the ring," a reader can't help but be chilled.



The unsung hero of the book is Owen's father, Dick, who until his death in 2005 was still marveling at the accomplishments of his brave son. "Perhaps it is better to depart reaching for the stars," Dick says late in the book, "than to live a hundred years and be forever miserable, disappointed, and embittered." Those are poignant words from a man who bore witness to one of boxing's most hellish nights.

—Don Stradley

DON'T MISS WILLIAM DETTLOFF

EVERY MONDAY ... EXCLUSIVELY ON: thering-online.com

Always insightful and often provocative, William Dettloff, THE RING's senior writer, is the thinking-fans' columnist, a writer who never settles for the same old stale commentary you've already read a dozen times. For example, here's Dettloff's take on a handful of hot topics:

The effects of steroids: If steroids compelled men to kill their families, the terrible sound of James Toney, married father of six, slinging deviled eggs down his throat would right now be echoing throughout his otherwise silent, corpse-strewn house.

Post-fight interviews: If you too were wondering why Vic Darchinyan made no real sense five minutes after getting pancaked, consider that five minutes before, he'd gotten pancaked. Why are people always surprised when a fighter who's just suffered a concussion says nonsensical things?

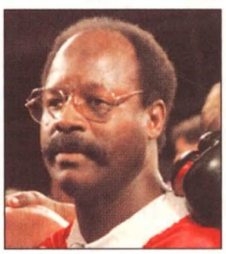
The white stuff: If you've never seen (Alexander) Povetkin, picture mayonnaise in short pants and gloves. This guy is so white he makes Sultan Ibragimov look like Wesley Snipes.

Dettloff on thering-online.com ... The perfect way to answer the week's opening bell!

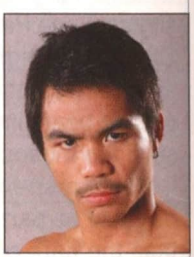
4748/02.08

Outside the Ropes

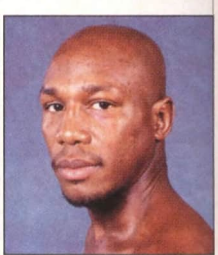
In January former heavyweight contender **Randall "Tex" Cobb**, 54, graduated magna cum laude (signifying a grade-point average between 3.50 and 3.74) from Temple University in Philadelphia. "It was nice to have the opportunity to wear a robe, step up there, and not have to worry about bleeding," quipped Cobb, who earned a bachelor of science in sports and recreation management ... The **Mexican Federation of Boxing Commissions** has approved the use of instant replay in order to ensure that referees' calls or non-calls are correct. The new policy went into effect on February 9 ... Widespread interest in last year's sold-out heavyweight fight between **Sinan Samil Sam** and **Oliver McCall** in Ankara, Turkey, the first pro boxing card in the country in almost 30 years, has resulted in the formation of the **Turkish Professional Boxing Commission** ... The 20-year-old boxing program at **Northern Michigan University's U.S. Olympic Education Center**, which has produced 12 Olympians and 97 U.S. national champions, has closed due to lack of funding. The end of the program was a bitter blow for a number of reasons. "The program is about boxing, of course, but it's about more than that," head coach **Al Mitchell** told the *Philadelphia Daily News*. "These are inner-city kids we're talking about. Numerous guys got their degrees here. Almost 100 percent at least graduated from high school. Three or four of our athletes became teachers. One is a principle. Several others are coaches. We have had athletes go on to own their own businesses, or learn a trade." Mitchell and assistant coach **David Reid**, who came out of the program to win an Olympic gold medal in 1996 and the WBA junior middleweight title in '99, will remain in Marquette, Michigan, and train amateur boxers ... **FightFax**, the New Jersey-based record-keeping outfit, is for sale ... Drug charges against retired super middleweight **Ricky Thornberry**, 39, were dropped by the Brisbane (Australia) Magistrates Court ... The Los Angeles Police Department is investigating the illegal siphoning of more than $130,000 from **Manny Pacquiao**'s Wells Fargo bank account. **Pia Quijada**, the wife of Pacquiao's driver, **Joseph Jose**, allegedly perpetrated the fraudulent transactions ... **Daryl Hudson**, **Shane Mosley**'s former strength and conditioning coach, has filed a defamation lawsuit against the boxer, who claimed Hudson gave him steroids without his knowledge. According to the suit filed in Los Angeles Superior Court, Hudson "never gave, pushed, recommended, or in any way made the defendant take the banned substances" ... Former cruiserweight contender and heavyweight journeyman **Elijah Tillery**, 50, was found guilty of carrying a sawed-off shotgun, hidden inside a three-foot toy alligator. Tillery faces 3 to 15 years in prison ... Former IBF bantamweight titleholder **Tim Austin**, 36, has been charged with domestic violence after his wife, **Laquanda Austin**, said he kicked her in the head and repeatedly punched her. Austin has been inactive since April 2006, when he was stopped by **Eric Aiken** ... Filipino junior flyweight **Alex Aroy**, 23, died on February 4 following his 10-round decision loss to **Arnel Tadena** at the Villaba Gym in Leyte, Philippines. After leaving the ring and returning to the locker room, Aroy, 12-6-2 (6), complained of difficulty urinating and excruciating pain in his abdominal region. The local hospital lacked the facilities to treat him, so Aroy was taken to Manuel Veloso Memorial Hospital, approximately 40 miles away. He died en route. The initial finding was that the boxer died of cardio-respiratory arrest, but Aroy's manager, **Red "Wakee" Salud** suggested an autopsy be performed ... IBF President **Marian Muhammad** suffered a double tragedy in January, when two grandchildren were killed in separate incidents. **Ashley Heath**, 18, was shot and killed outside of a house in Allentown, Pennsylvania, where a party was taking place, and **Samir Wilkins**, 20, was stabbed to death outside of a restaurant in New York City.



Mitchell: Loses funding



Pacquiao: Ripped off



Austin: Accused of beating wife

Quotable

"Gyms are a place where these kids can channel their anger and find role models. Delinquents can turn into gentlemen. There are so many cases of that in boxing."

—Ricky Hatton, pledging to do his bit to tackle crime and violent behavior by training young people, after being shocked to hear about an assault on a man who had been drinking in the same pub as the junior welterweight champion.

"Just because ignorant people slurred black athletes in the past doesn't give Hopkins the freedom to slur white athletes today. Intelligent people are repulsed by racial taunts and racial intimidation. There's no place for it. Not even in boxing."

*—**New York Post** boxing writer George Willis, an African-American, commenting on Bernard Hopkins' remark that he would "never lose to a white boy."*

[Ratings Analysis]

For Period Ended February 17, 2008

Heavyweights: Sergei Liakhovich exits after losing for the second straight time, replaced at seven by Alexander Povetkin (10th last issue). Alexander Dimitrenko debuts at 10.

Cruiserweights: No changes.

Light Heavyweights: No changes.

Super Middleweights: Jermain Taylor debuts at 10, coming off a credible catchweight performance against Kelly Pavlik. The former middleweight champion replaces Edison Miranda (10th last issue).

Middleweights: Javier Castillejo (sixth last issue) leaps to four, while Felix Sturm (fourth last issue) climbs one place to three. Taylor's departure to super middleweight moves everyone from seven to 10 up one place each, opening a place for David Lopez at 10.

Junior Middleweights: No changes.

Welterweights: Carlos Quintana enters at three based on his decision over Paul Williams (second last issue), who sinks to four. Quintana's entry enables Shane Mosley (third last issue) to move to two, and slides everyone from four to nine down one place each. Oktay Urkal (10th last issue) exits.

Junior Welterweights: No changes.

Lightweights: A decision over Gairy St. Clair enables Amir Khan to move up from eight to seven, switching positions with Yuri Romanov.

Junior Lightweights: No changes.

Featherweights: No changes.

Junior Featherweights: No changes.

Bantamweights: No changes.

Junior Bantamweights: Serious shakeup as Fernando Montiel (fifth last issue) vaults to number one, based on his stoppage of Martin Castillo, who slides from one to eight. Cristian Mijares (fourth last issue) switches with Nobuo Nashiro (third last issue), thanks to his victory over Jose Navarro. The reshuffling moves Jorge Arce (sixth last issue), Dimitro Kirilov (seventh last issue), and Navarro (eighth last issue) up one place each each.

Flyweights: Hugo Cazares moves up from junior flyweight, replacing Wandee Singwancha at number 10.

Junior Flyweights: As Cazares (second last issue) exits to campaign at flyweight, everyone from two to 10 to climbs a notch and Juanito Rubillar enters at 10.

Strawweights: Rodel Mayol (eighth last issue) departs after several losses, advancing Omar Soto from 10 to nine, and making room for Nkosinathi Joyi at 10.

Pound-for-Pound: No changes.

The Ring
"The Bible Of Boxing"

Pound-For-Pound

1. **Floyd Mayweather**
   Welterweight
2. **Manny Pacquiao**
   Junior Lightweight
3. **Juan Manuel Marquez**
   Junior Lightweight
4. **Bernard Hopkins**
   Light Heavyweight
5. **Joe Calzaghe**
   Super Middleweight
6. **Israel Vazquez**
   Junior Featherweight
7. **Miguel Cotto**
   Welterweight
8. **Ricky Hatton**
   Junior Welterweight
9. **Winky Wright**
   Middleweight
10. **Rafael Marquez**
    Junior Featherweight

For weekly updated Ring ratings, go to **TheRing-online.com**

The Ring Ratings

For Period Ended February 17, 2008

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by The Ring are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between The Ring's number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

The Ring Ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board, with the participation of The Ring Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world. To see the complete list of our panelists, click on "Ratings" at thering-online.com

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

Cristian Mijares jumps to three at junior bantamweight after beating Jose Navarro

Heavyweights

Weight Unlimited

Champ: Vacant

1. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO** Ukraine 49-3 (44)
2. **SAMUEL PETER** Las Vegas, NV 29-1 (22)
3. **RUSLAN CHAGAEV** Uzbekistan 24-0-1 (17)
4. **OLEG MASKAEV** Sacramento, CA 34-5 (26)
5. **NICOLAY VALUEV** Russia 48-1 (34)
6. **SULTAN IBRAGIMOV** Russia 22-0-1 (17)
7. **ALEXANDER POVETKIN** Russia 15-0 (11)
8. **VLADIMIR VIRCHIS** Ukraine 24-1 (20)
9. **TONY THOMPSON** Washington, D.C. 31-1 (19)
10. **ALEXANDER DIMITRENKO** Ukraine 27-0 (17)

Jr. Middleweights

Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CORY SPINKS** St. Louis, MO 36-4 (11)
2. **VERNON FORREST** Atlanta, GA 40-2 (29)
3. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA** Los Angeles, CA 38-5 (30)
4. **ALEX BUNEMA** Atlanta, GA 29-5-2 (15)
5. **JOACHIM ALCINE** Canada 30-0 (19)
6. **SERGEI DZINZIRUK** Germany 34-0 (22)
7. **TRAVIS SIMMS** Norwalk, CT 25-1 (19)
8. **ROMAN KARMAZIN** Russia 36-4-1 (23)
9. **VERNO PHILLIPS** Aurora, CO 41-10-1 (21)
10. **SERGIO MARTINEZ** Spain 41-1-1 (21)

Featherweights

Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CHRIS JOHN** Indonesia 41-0-1 (22)
2. **ROBERT GUERRERO** Gilroy, CA 21-1-1 (14)
3. **HIROYUKI ENOKI** Japan 27-0-1 (19)
4. **JORGE SOLIS** Mexico 32-1-2 (23)
5. **NAOKI MATSUDA** Japan 28-7-3 (11)
6. **STEVEN LUEVANO** La Puente, CA 34-1 (15)
7. **JORGE LINARES** Venezuela 25-0 (16)
8. **MARTIN HONORIO** Mexico 24-4-1 (12)
9. **THOMAS MASHABA** South Africa 20-2-4 (12)
10. **NICKY COOK** England 28-1(16)

Jr. Featherweights

Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: ISRAEL VAZQUEZ Mexico 42-4 (31)

1. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 37-4 (33)
2. **CELESTINO CABALLERO** Panama 28-2 (19)
3. **DANIEL PONCE DE LEON** Mexico 34-1 (30)
4. **STEVE MOLITOR** Canada 26-0 (10)
5. **SOMSAK SITHCHATCHAWAL** Thailand 54-2-1 (43)
6. **SERGIO MANUEL MEDINA** Argentina 29-1 (17)
7. **TAKALANI NDLOVU** South Africa 28-4 (18)
8. **POONSAWAT KRATINGAENGGYM** Thailand 31-1 (20)
9. **KIKO MARTINEZ** Spain 17-0 (14)
10. **REY BAUTISTA** Philippines 24-1(18)

Bantamweights

Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **HOZUMI HASEGAWA** Japan 23-2 (7)
2. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM** Thailand 58-3-2 (42)
3. **WLADIMIR SIDORENKO** Ukraine 21-0-2 (7)
4. **SILENCE MABUZA** South Africa 21-2 (17)
5. **GERRY PENALOSA** Philippines 52-6-2 (35)
6. **JHONNY GONZALEZ** Mexico 35-6 (29)
7. **RICARDO CORDOBA** Panama 31-1-2 (20)
8. **JOSEPH AGBEKO** Ghana 25-1 (22)
9. **SIMONE MALUDROTTU** Italy 25-2 (10)
10. **LUIS PEREZ** Nicaragua 25-2 (16)

Cruiserweights
Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: DAVID HAYE
England 20-1 (19)

1. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**
Philadelphia, PA 21-1 (11)
2. **JEAN-MARC MORMECK**
France 33-4 (22)
3. **O'NEIL BELL**
Atlanta, GA 26-2-1 (24)
4. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK**
Poland 40-2 (30)
5. **ENZO MACCARINELLI**
Wales 28-1 (21)
6. **FIRAT ARSLAN**
Germany 28-3-1 (18)
7. **MARCO HUCK**
Germany 19-1 (13)
8. **VADIM TOKAREV**
Russia 24-1-1 (17)
9. **MATT GODFREY**
Providence, RI 16-0 (9)
10. **JOHNATHON BANKS**
Detroit, MI 18-0 (13)

Light Heavyweights
Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: BERNARD HOPKINS
Philadelphia, PA 48-4-1 (32)

1. **ZSOLT ERDEI**
Hungary 28-0 (17)
2. **CLINTON WOODS**
England 41-3-1 (24)
3. **ANTONIO TARVER**
Orlando, FL 26-4 (19)
4. **GLEN JOHNSON**
Miami, FL 47-11-2 (32)
5. **CHAD DAWSON**
New Haven, CT 25-0 (17)
6. **DANNY GREEN**
Australia 25-3 (22)
7. **ROY JONES**
Pensacola, FL 52-4 (38)
8. **PAUL BRIGGS**
Australia 26-3 (18)
9. **JULIO GONZALEZ**
Huntington Beach, CA 41-4 (25)
10. **ADRIAN DIACONU**
Canada 24-0 (15)

Super Middleweights
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: JOE CALZAGHE
Wales 44-0 (32)

1. **MIKKEL KESSLER**
Denmark 39-1 (29)
2. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
Australia 30-3 (23)
3. **LUCIAN BUTE**
Canada 21-0 (17)
4. **JEFF LACY**
St. Petersburg, FL 23-1 (17)
5. **LIBRADO ANDRADE**
Mexico 26-1 (20)
6. **CARL FROCH**
England 22-0 (18)
7. **ALLAN GREEN**
Tulsa, OK 26-1 (18)
8. **SAKIO BIKA**
Australia 25-3-2 (15)
9. **DENIS INKIN**
Germany 32-0 (24)
10. **JERMAIN TAYLOR**
Little Rock, AR 27-2-1 (17)

Middleweights
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: KELLY PAVLIK
Youngstown, OH 33-0 (29)

1. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM**
Germany 25-0 (20)
2. **WINKY WRIGHT**
St. Petersburg, FL 51-4-1 (25)
3. **FELIX STURM**
Germany 28-2-1 (12)
4. **SEBASTIAN SYLVESTER**
Germany 28-2 (13)
5. **JAVIER CASTILLEJO**
Spain 62-7 (42)
6. **AMIN ASIKAINEN**
Finland 23-1 (16)
7. **RANDY GRIFFIN**
Louisville, KY 24-1-3 (12)
8. **RAYMOND JOVAL**
Netherlands 37-4 (16)
9. **JOHN DUDDY**
Ireland 23-0 (17)
10. **DAVID LOPEZ**
Mexico 33-12 (21)

Welterweights
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: FLOYD MAYWEATHER
Grand Rapids, MI 39-0 (25)

1. **MIGUEL COTTO**
Puerto Rico 31-0 (25)
2. **SHANE MOSLEY**
Pomona, CA 44-5 (37)
3. **CARLOS QUINTANA**
Puerto Rico 25-1 (19)
4. **PAUL WILLIAMS**
Augusta, GA 33-1 (24)
5. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
Mexico 35-5 (25)
6. **ZAB JUDAH**
Brooklyn, NY 36-5 (25)
7. **KERMIT CINTRON**
Reading, PA 29-1 (27)
8. **LUIS COLLAZO**
Queens, NY 28-3 (13)
9. **JOSHUA CLOTTEY**
Bronx, NY 33-2 (19)
10. **JACKSON BONSU**
Belgium 27-1 (23)

Jr. Welterweights
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: RICKY HATTON
England 43-1 (31)

1. **JUNIOR WITTER**
England 36-1-2 (21)
2. **PAUL MALIGNAGGI**
Brooklyn, NY 24-1 (5)
3. **GAVIN REES**
Wales 27-0 (13)
4. **VIVIAN HARRIS**
Brooklyn, NY 28-3-1 (18)
5. **SOULEYMANE M'BAYE**
France 36-2-1 (21)
6. **LOVEMORE NDOU**
Australia 46-9-1 (31)
7. **JUAN LAZCANO**
El Paso, TX 37-4-1 (27)
8. **DEMETRIUS HOPKINS**
Philadelphia, PA 28-0-1 (11)
9. **RICARDO TORRES**
Colombia, 32-1 (28)
10. **HERMAN NGOUDJO**
Canada 16-2 (9)

Lightweights
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: JOEL CASAMAYOR
Miami, FL 35-3-1 (21)

1. **JUAN DIAZ**
Houston, TX 33-0 (17)
2. **DAVID DIAZ**
Chicago, IL 33-1-1 (17)
3. **JOSE SANTA CRUZ**
Mexico 25-3 (14)
4. **JULIO DIAZ**
Coachella, CA 34-4 (25))
5. **NATE CAMPBELL**
Jacksonville, FL 31-5-1 (25)
6. **MICHAEL KATSIDIS**
Australia 23-0 (20)
7. **AMIR KHAN**
England 16-0 (12)
8. **YURI ROMANOV**
Belarus 20-2 (13)
9. **ZAHIR RAHEEM**
Las Vegas, NV 29-2 (17)
10. **ANTHONY PETERSON**
Washington, DC 26-0 (19)

Jr. Lightweights
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
Philippines 45-3-2 (35)
2. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ**
Mexico 48-3-1 (35)
3. **JOAN GUZMAN**
Dominican Republic 28-0 (17)
4. **EDWIN VALERO**
Venezuela 23-0 (23)
5. **HUMBERTO SOTO**
Mexico 43-6-2 (27)
6. **JORGE BARRIOS**
Argentina 47-3-1 (34)
7. **ALEX ARTHUR**
Scotland 26-1 (19)
8. **YODSANAN NANTHACHAI**
Thailand 50-3-1 (39)
9. **MZONKE FANA**
South Africa 27-3 (10)
10. **CASSIUS BALOYI**
South Africa 34-3-1 (18)

Jr. Bantamweights
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
Mexico 36-2-1 (27)
2. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
Venezuela 32-2 (27)
3. **CRISTIAN MJARES**
Mexico 34-3-2 (14)
4. **NOBUO NASHIRO**
Japan 10-1 (6)
5. **JORGE ARCE**
Mexico 48-4-1 (37)
6. **DIMITRI KIRILOV**
Russia 29-3 (9)
7. **JOSE NAVARRO**
Los Angeles, CA 26-4 (12)
8. **MARTIN CASTILLO**
Mexico 33-3 (17)
9. **Z GORRES**
Philippines 27-2-2 (15)
10. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
Australia 29-1-1 (23)

Flyweights
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **NONITO DONAIRE**
San Leandro, CA 19-1 (12)
2. **DAISUKE NAITO**
Japan 32-2-2 (20)
3. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
Thailand 67-3 (35)
4. **TAKEFUMI SAKATA**
Japan 31-4-2 (15)
5. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
Argentina 26-0-2 (16)
6. **ROBERTO VASQUEZ**
Panama 24-2 (17)
7. **DENKAOSAN KAOVICHIT**
Thailand 40-1-1 (16)
8. **JOSE LOPEZ**
Puerto Rico 35-7-2 (29)
9. **KOKI KAMEDA**
Japan 16-0 (11)
10. **HUGO CAZARES**
Mexico 26-4-1 (19)

Jr. Flyweights
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: IVAN CALDERON
Puerto Rico 30-0 (6)

1. **ULISES SOLIS**
Mexico 26-1-2 (20)
2. **GIOVANNI SEGURA**
Bell Gardens, CA 18-0-1 (14)
3. **EDGAR SOSA**
Mexico 31-5 (16)
4. **OMAR NINO**
Mexico 24-2-1 (10)
5. **DANIEL REYES**
Colombia 39-5-1 (30)
6. **NELSON DIEPPA**
Puerto Rico 24-4-2 (13)
7. **OMAR SALADO**
Mexico 17-0-2 (9)
8. **BRAHIM ASLOUM**
France 23-2 (9)
9. **JUAN CARLOS REVECO**
Argentina 17-1 (8)
10. **JUANITO RUBILLAR**
Philippines 44--10-7 (21)

Strawweights
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **YUTAKA NIDA**
Japan 22-1-3 (8)
2. **FLORANTE CONDES**
Philippines 22-3-1 (20)
3. **OLEYDONG SITHSAMERCHAI**
Thailand 25-0 (9)
4. **EAGLE KYOWA**
Japan 18-2 (6)
5. **MUHAMMAD RACHMAN**
Indonesia 61-6-5 (31)
6. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
Japan 19-3 (8)
7. **ROMAN GONZALEZ**
Nicaragua 17-0 (16)
8. **DONNIE NIETES**
Philippines 22-1-3 (13)
9. **OMAR SOTO**
Puerto Rico 13-1-1 (6)
10. **NKOSINATHI JOYI**
South Africa 17-0 (13)

By Jeff Ryan

Touch Gloves And ... Play Ball!

It's only natural that we boxing enthusiasts get jealous every year at this time, when the arrival of a new baseball season is treated like a religious experience by a genuflecting media. Out come the clichés referring to "cathedrals of green," and "rites of spring," and "men becoming little boys again." Give a baseball writer a keyboard and a whiff of freshly cut outfield grass and the poor fool can wax poetic about pine tar and a tobacco juice trail, for goodness sake.

Imagine if boxing got that kind of pampering every year. If, say, every April, boxing scribes made tipped-over spit buckets sound like fountains on the Champs Elysees, and wrote odes to the uppercut. Imagine if boxing was considered the National Pastime, and could survive such calamities as two major work stoppages and having some of its most prestigious records tainted by a cheating scandal. No wonder we fight followers are greener than AstroTurf with envy.

Actually, boxing and baseball have more in common than you might realize. Both built their halls of fame in Upstate New York. Both have powerhitters, screwballs, and playing fields that aren't of uniform size. And both sports enjoy a great history on the big screen. (*Rocky* and *Million Dollar Baby* won Oscars for Best Picture, of course, which is more than can be said for *Bull Durham*, *Field Of Dreams*, and *The Natural*. Take that, Kevin Costner!)

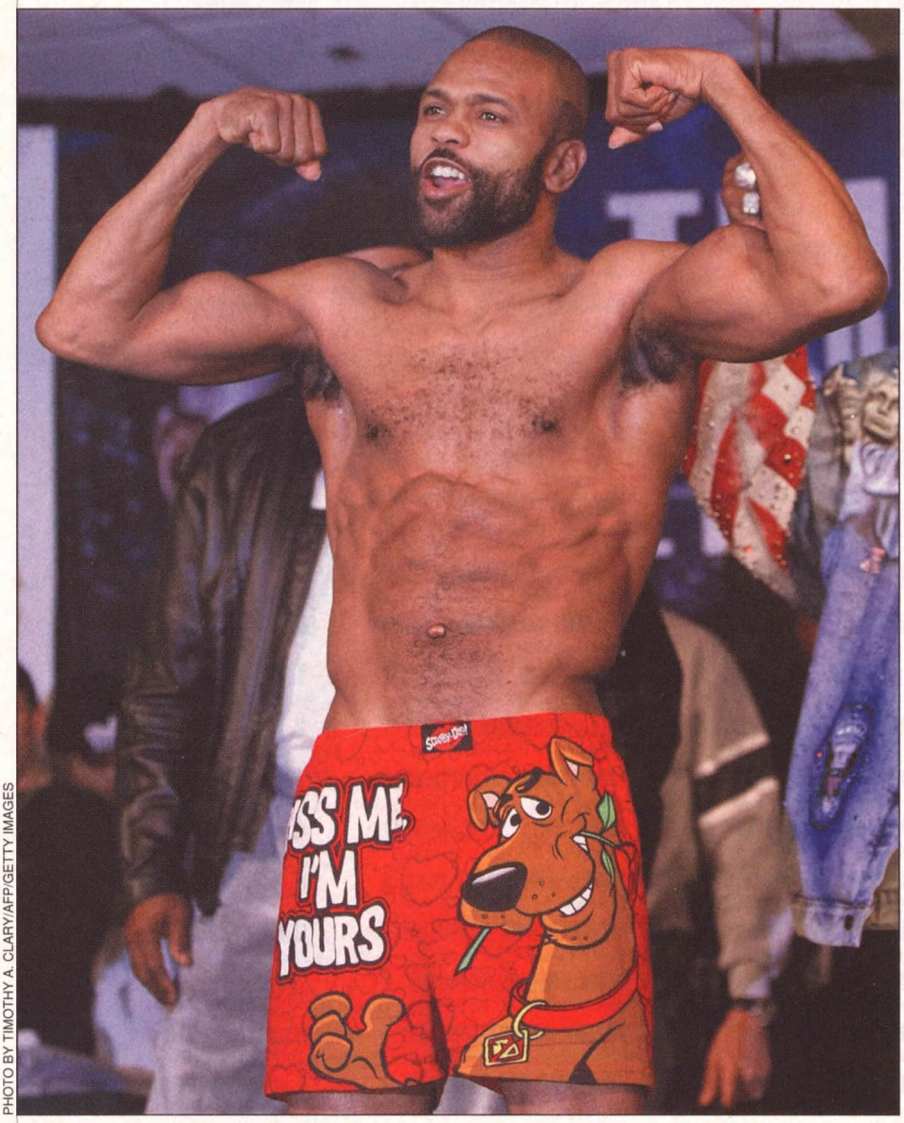


PHOTO BY TIMOTHY A. CLARY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

What do Jones and Rafael Palmeiro have in common?

Maybe instead of being jealous of the Grand Old Game, boxing ought to try to be more like it. Or at least steal some of its better ideas. Such as ...

Keeping the bad boys out of the Hall: Mark McGwire hit 583 home runs, yet hasn't gotten the call from Cooperstown. And it's expected that fellow steroid users and suspected users, like Rafael Palmeiro, Sammy Sosa, and Barry Bonds, will have trouble gaining entry too.

When it comes to its own hallowed hall, boxing would be wise to show the same intolerance for the use of performance-enhancing drugs. That means James Toney, Shane Mosley, Fernando Vargas, Roy Jones, and Evander Holyfield get shut out of Canastota. So, too, does Virgil Hill, if allegations that he failed a drug test following his November bout with Firat Aslan prove true.

Sorry, fellas. But if you want in, admission is $9.50.

Telling the geriatrics that they're not welcome: The U.S. will be no country for old men when state athletic commissions start acting like Major League baseball teams. If Bo Jackson decides that he wants to play this season, at 45 years of age and way past his peak, whatever teams he approaches will laugh and advise him to go back home, make soup, and watch *Wheel Of Fortune*. But a 45-year-old Evander Holyfield decides he wants to compete, and you can be sure that he'll be able to maintain a schedule to his liking from January through December. That has to stop.

But don't worry, all you graybeards. There will still be a place for you to wrap your hands and bite down on your mouthpieces, just as soon as boxing begins ...

Staging Old-Timers Days: The festivities at baseball's Rogaine reunions usually include a two-inning game in which the old coots take the field once again just for the fun of it. The best part is when the legends dust off their trademark plays or pitches. Yours truly once saw a fiftysomething Willie Mays make a basket-catch in center field at Yankee Stadium. Ryne Duren, a visually-challenged former Yankee pitcher known for his lack of control, always liked to take the mound on Oldies Day and playfully wing his first toss 10 feet over the batter's head as the crown roared.

Think of the scene a few years from now if, for instance, Andrew Golota nailed Riddick Bowe in the groin once more for old time's sake during their two-round exhibition. Mike Tyson could bite Holyfield's ear. Oliver McCall could cry and pretend to have a nervous breakdown. Zab Judah could fire his ring stool at someone. Chuckles and fun all around.

Tinkering with the playing fields: Hey, it may not be ethical, but it goes on all the time. The Detroit Tigers supposedly water down the dirt around home plate, and the Chicago Cubs let their infield grass grow exceptionally high, in order to slow down ground balls. Boxing needs to utilize more of those "dirty tricks" that aren't really all that dirty.

Is Angelo Dundee available to teach other trainers his rope-loosening technique? Maybe the canvas can be made a little lumpier and softer the next time a mover like Paulie Malignaggi squares off with a slow-footed banger. Whoever said a playing field has to be level didn't have a garden hose or a wrench in his hand.

Writing cool songs and bits: Baseball has given us "Centerfield" by John Fogerty and "Take Me Out To The Ball Game" by Jack Norworth and Albert Von Tilzer. Some boxing lover should write the lyrics to "Ring Center" and "Take Me Out to the Brawl Game." And the Sweet Science's answer to Abbott and Costello's "Who's on First?" can be "Who's Rated First?" a convoluted, zany attempt by Penn and Teller to interpret the WBC ratings.

Playing the big ballparks: Bernard Hopkins had the right idea when he suggested that his showdown with Joe Calzaghe take place at Yankee Stadium. Enough already with Las Vegas and Atlantic City. There's no better setting for a major bout than a ring set up at second base in a historic baseball stadium.

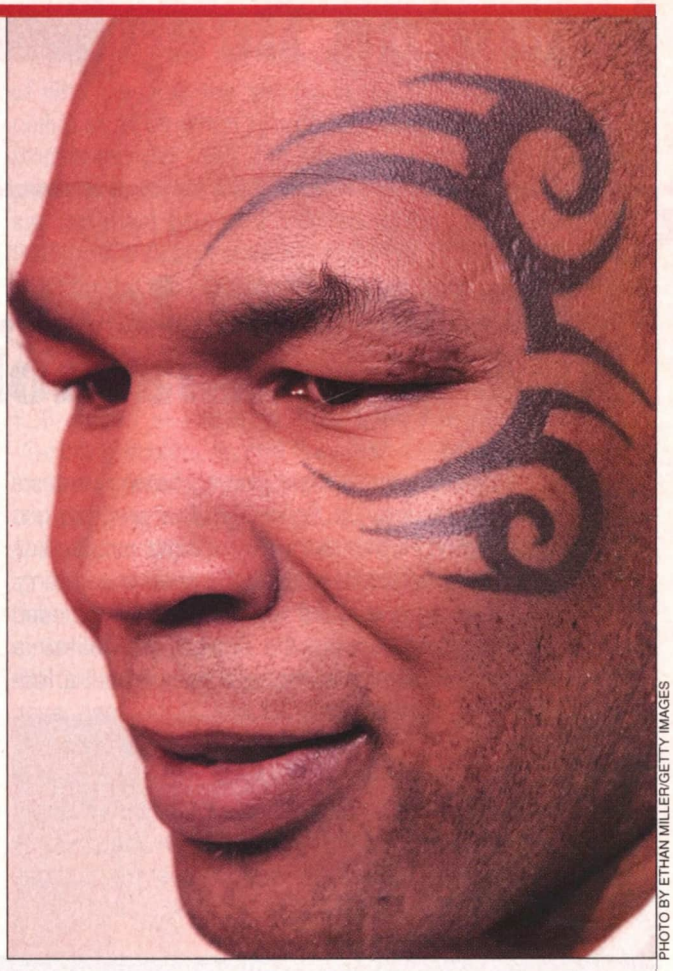


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

You too could have a tattoo, just like Iron Mike's

Instituting giveaway days: Jorge Arce lollipops to all kids 10 and under. Hopkins "Executioner" masks to all adults 18 and over who don't have a prior criminal record. Malignaggi Track Shoe Day. Ricky Hatton Bobblehead Day. (The doll's noggin actually bounces around like Hatton's at the end of Floyd Mayweather's right hand.) Tyson Facial Tattoo Day. (What? No line around the block for tickets?) Holyfield Bran Muffin Day. "Pretty Boy" Floyd Soap Day. (Bars provided to every kid who needs his mouth washed out with it.) And Bob Arum XL Jockstrap Day. (Perfect for holding a big pair of cojones, the kind Arum displayed by charging $34.95 to watch Edgar Sosa-Jesus Iribe and Julio Cesar Chavez Jr.-Jose Celaya on pay-per-view.)

Allowing a megastar to set his own rules: The Astros and Yankees both let Roger Clemens come out of semi-retirement whenever he darned well pleased, gave him an obscene amount of money for doing so, then watched him coyly disappear back into the shadows, leaving everyone to question his commitment. Imagine a boxer getting away with that. Oh, that's right. Oscar De La Hoya has for the past three years. ■

By Ivan Goldman

Sorting Out Joes, Pros, And Incomparable Roy Jones

A while ago, I spent a night judging boxing contests for *Pros vs. Joes* on Spike TV. The program pits regular guys—volunteers all—against outstanding athletes, and in this particular episode the sport was boxing. Each "Joe" had to go one round with Roy Jones. Sounded like fun for everybody except the Joes. Two California judges were on the panel with me, and we were all a little worried Jones might accidentally kill one of the Joes, even though we knew they were better-than-average athletes.

Sure, Jones in his mid-30s was a split-second behind his peak capabilities, but he was still 1,845 times better than your average contestant. I derived this number from a mathematical formula that measures the precise chances of a snowball surviving in hell.

Most people don't understand how hard and fast pros throw punches, and pros aren't used to sparring with opponents who are unfamiliar with the controlled madness inside that ring. When the fighter is as skilled as Jones, such a contest could be a recipe for serious disaster,

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGE

Jones used the same recipe against Trinidad (above) as he did on the* Pros vs. Joes *(top)

especially if Jones were to get irritated in there.

Also, we knew there was absolutely no chance some guy off the street could actually land any shots against Jones, who'd see them coming before the opponent could even think to throw them. So we were flabbergasted when the first Joe came out and actually landed punches, even combinations. But after about a minute, Jones started tapping back—still getting whacked once in a while, but making his Joe pay a bit. And Roy never missed. In the third minute, Jones, still slapping his man occasionally, decided not to let him land any more punches and added a dash of trash talk to the lesson ("C'mon man, come get me"). Jones slipped and countered and made the Joe wish he'd been in a car crash on the way over.

By the end of the round, the Joe understood more about Jones than he'd care to recall. He understood deeply that when he was landing those shots early on, it was only because Roy allowed him to, that inside those ropes Roy could call up an earthquake if he felt like it. And the Joe learned just how long three minutes could be. At the closing bell, the Joe was as tired as he would ever be in his life. If somebody had pointed an electric fan at him, he'd have hit the canvas. But he wasn't close to being seriously hurt. He was just, as they say around the gym circuit, schooled.

And that's how it went, same scenario, one Joe after another. Three of them, as I recall. Following the same recipe with precision, Roy gave each of them as much as he could take without breaking him down entirely. Roy knocked the hardest-to-discourage Joe on his butt, but he went down mostly from exhaustion. Each opponent passed through the same stages of fright, determination, exultation, disappointment, and finally true understanding. A lifetime of lessons inside three minutes.

We judges were proud of all the Joes, who overcame their fears and gave it their best, and of Roy, who never lost his humor or his temper and let each man taste a little success before the final segment of instruction. After the final bell for the final Joe, who stood panting like he'd just run a four-minute mile, we congratulated them all. Roy was breathing about as hard as a guy who'd played a few rounds of checkers. That's pretty much what he'd been doing.

Which brings me to Jones' match with Felix Trinidad. For sure, Trinidad, once a great champion, is no "Joe." But as I watched him go at it against Jones, in what turned out to be a pretty decent contest, I was reminded of those Joes. Tito was gradually bathed in the light of true understanding, but the lesson was stretched over 12 rounds instead of one. Jones was in control even though in those early rounds, Tito and many of us watching didn't know it. He was just gauging his man, measuring his responses, calculating how much of his original plan he should follow and what he might have to tinker with. And when the fight was over, and the unbowed Tito smiled in appreciation, I was proud of them both.

Showtime Millions: I always like to keep track of who's pulling the strings in the fight game, so I took notice in 2005 when tycoon and principal owner Sumner Redstone split CBS and Viacom in two, with Showtime going over to the CBS side of the divide. Showtime, the second most powerful channel in the sport, could, with Redstone's deep pockets, challenge Time-Warner-owned HBO for the top of the fight game anytime it chooses.

A year after the CBS-Viacom divorce, Viacom fired CEO Tom Freston, sending him away with a diamond-studded golden parachute worth $60-million in retirement cash and $20-million in stock options. I kid you not. Maybe the Viacom bumblers figured they had to show special regard for a man who'd championed Beavis And Butt-head. But I couldn't help noticing you could put together an awful lot of great fights with Freston's $80-million. My intuition tells me he'd have survived just fine on his savings plus unemployment compensation.

Meanwhile, over at CBS, the new Showtime overseer, the Great Network Deciders stole Katie Couric from NBC

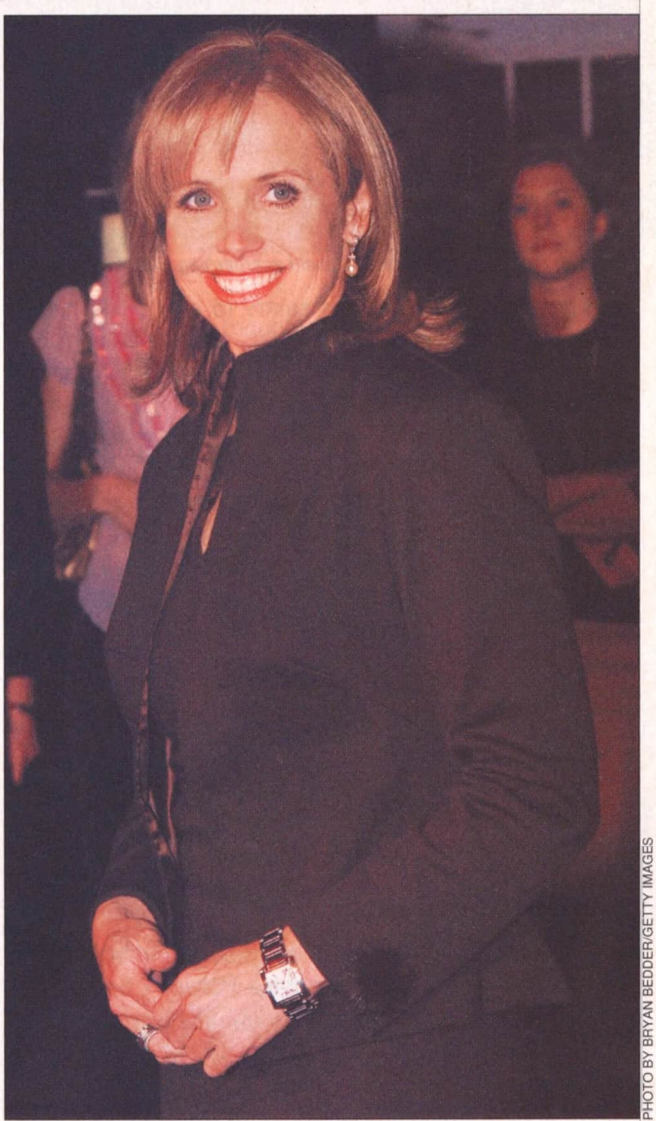


PHOTO BY BRYAN BEDDER/GETTY IMAGES

Think of all the great fights Showtime could have bought with Couric's salary

PHOTO BY MATTHIAS KERN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Chambers adopts the Mohandas Gandhi approach against Povetkin

and gave her a $15-million salary to anchor its nightly news. Over the course of 2007, the show's ratings dropped like, well, an anchor, losing over a million viewers and coming in third to NBC and ABC in all major markets. All this makes you wonder whether these fine-tuned CBS thinkers can make the right decisions when it comes to boxing, where, whether they like it or not, they're now a powerful force. Wouldn't it be a gutsy move if CBS put some boxing cards on its flagship over-the-air channel again? That would be a whole lot smarter than the contract with Couric.

Miscommunication: When Buddy McGirt yelled "Three more minutes!" to way-behind Eddie Chambers before the final round of his 12-rounder with Alexander Povetkin, McGirt was informing his fighter that's all the time he had left to kayo his man and go home a winner. But Chambers had a different interpretation, and it was all over his face—three more minutes and this nightmare will be over.

Chambers was technically as good or better than his opponent. But unable to discourage Povetkin, he gradually converted to a Mohandas Gandhi strategy of nonviolence. You hate to see a fighter give up like that in a contest that's so pivotal to his career. Especially if, like me, you're tired of watching Russian heavyweights walk down Americans. The bout was further desecration of HBO's *Boxing After Dark*—a watered-down series that used to be off-limits to non-warriors.

If a fighter doesn't have the will to gamble, he should get out of the way and let somebody else take the fight. Chris Arreola, for instance, who, like Chambers, is an American heavyweight promoted by Goossen-Tutor. What's Dan Goossen saving him for? The next millennium? Give the kid a shot, Dan. He might surprise you.

Beneath Roger's Shoe: You have to hand it to Floyd Mayweather, who found a way to avoid Miguel Cotto and make money doing it because, joy of joys, there was senior citizen Oscar De La Hoya, still lurking about. All Floyd had to do was wake him up, dust him off, point him toward Las Vegas, and remind him this is a Leap Year—time to compete in another superfight. Easier night for Floyd, bigger purse. And what does Oscar get out of this besides millions and millions? His own magnificent opportunity to avoid Cotto.

Once again the promoters will be teasing gossip media with the prospect of Daddy Mayweather working Oscar's corner against his own kid. This Mayweather-vs.-Mayweather soap opera just won't quit. In the previous episode, we left the humiliated Floyd Senior hanging around the kid's camp with nothing to do while Uncle Roger besmirched and belittled Daddy's abilities to HBO's 24/7 camera, talking about his brother like he was some-

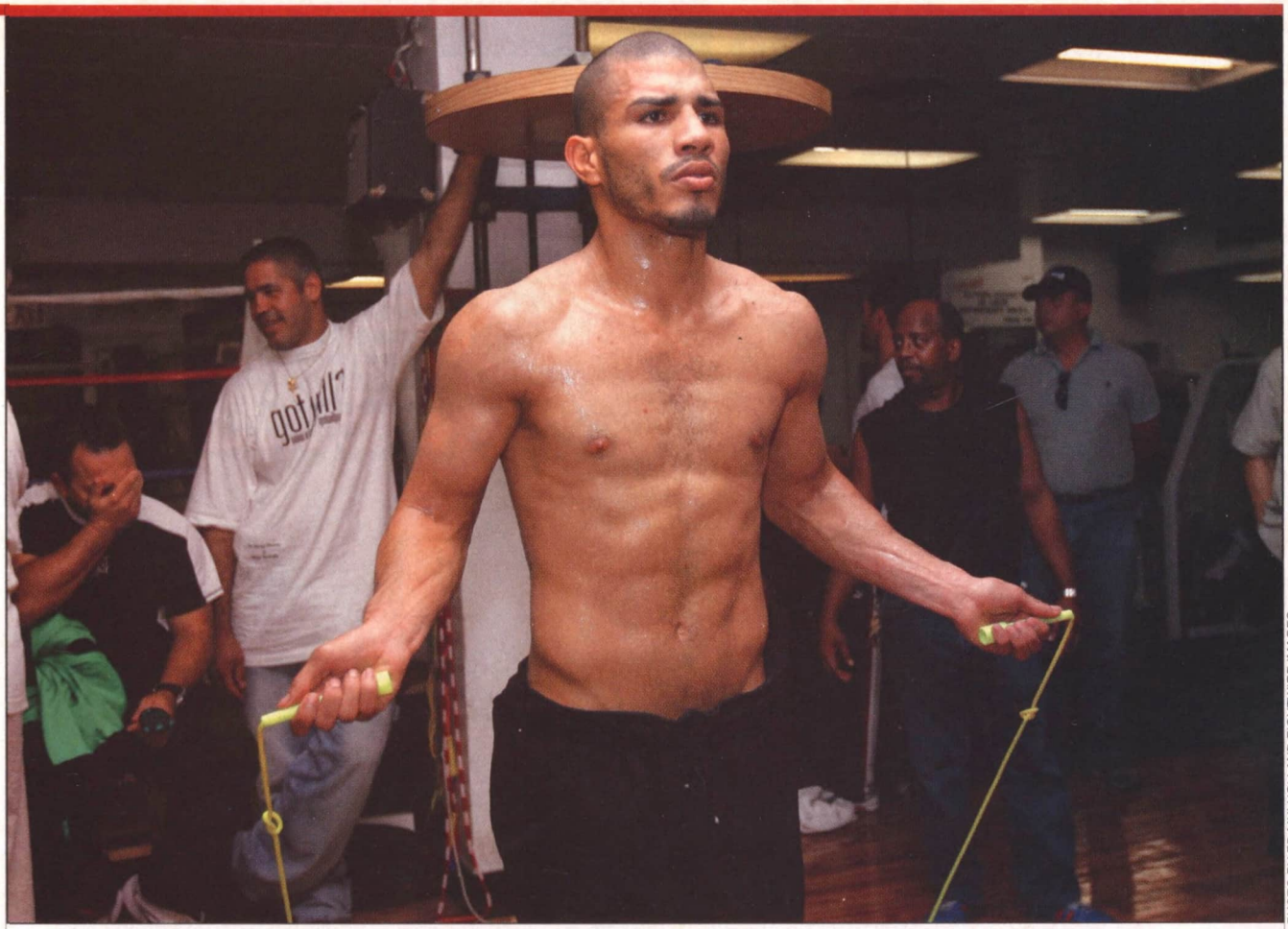


PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Is Mayweather using Oscar to duck Cotto?

thing he keeps finding under his shoe.

I'm thinking maybe this time the Oscar camp should think about calling on 21st century technology—plant a transponder on Pretty Boy so at least Oscar will know where the punches are coming from. I kid Oscar. The truth is, he came close last time, and if it were up to him, the whole fight would have been like its final few seconds, a toe-to-toe swap. But I fear Floyd learned too well in those seconds just how carefully he must proceed against a man who may still have, as his partner Sugar Shane Mosley contends, the best left hook in the business. Still, losing nine more months of tread on his tires won't help Oscar's chances.

Bagg's Fixation: In his April column, trash-talker Jim Bagg once again fantasizes pathetically about me carrying his jockstrap. Jim, try to get your mind on something else. And rather than bare these unhealthy obsessions to your 11 readers, why not share them instead with one of your transvestite bartenders?

Magoos: First, Oscar nominations to ShoBox's Steve Farhood and his partner, Nick Charles, who pretended last-minute opponent Roberto Acevedo was a credible threat to lightweight Olympian Mickey Bey. As the match progressed and fans fainted from the odor, Farhood and Charles still talked daffodils. If your picture wasn't working, you'd have thought a real bout was taking place. An actual Magoo goes to judge Mark Nelson, who had it only 77-76 for Bey. Acevedo, who had the tools to make a fight of it, ran for four rounds, burned up his fuel, and clinched the next four. ■

PHOTO BY CRAIG BENNETT/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Undefeated Bey was never threatened in ShoBox *stinker*

[Camera Clicks]

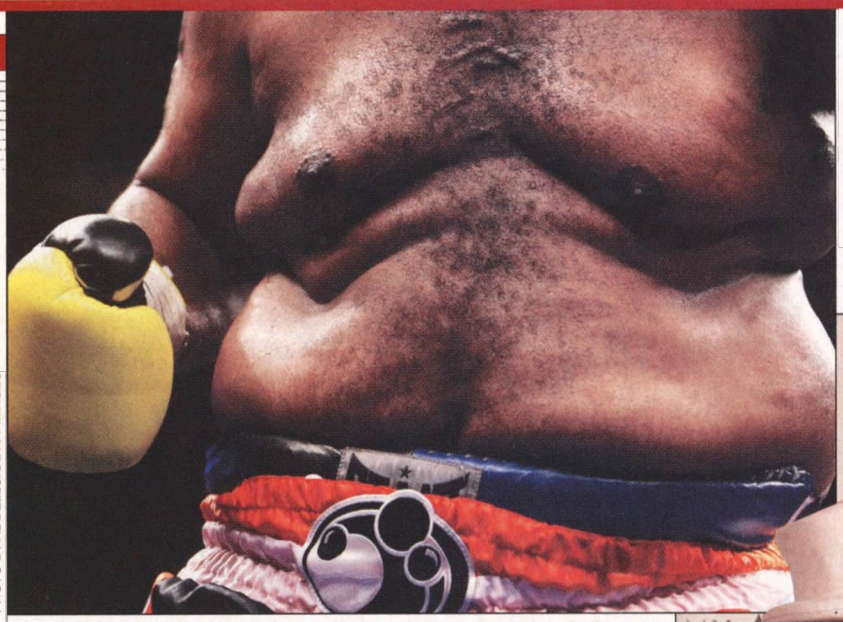


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

When you see a photo like this in a boxing magazine, it can only mean one thing: An overweight round-card girl lost her top. Either that, or 340-pound Gabe Brown was recently in action. Despite being built like a shar pei, Brown actually has half-decent conditioning, and he managed an eight-round draw against favored Paul Marinaccio at Madison Square Garden in January. (And yes, this provides proof that you can fit a round fighter into a Square Garden.)

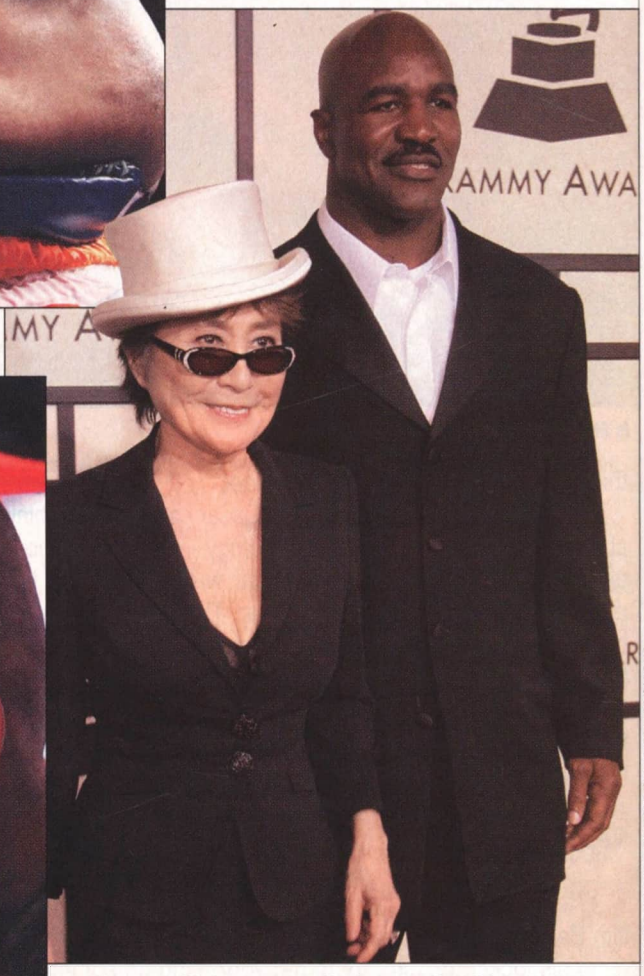


PHOTO BY GABRIEL BOUYS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

We're not sure who has contributed less to the music industry, but for whatever reason, both Yoko Ono and Evander Holyfield were invited to the 50th annual Grammy Awards in Los Angeles in February. By the way, Yoko, the "Monopoly" guy called; he wants his hat back.

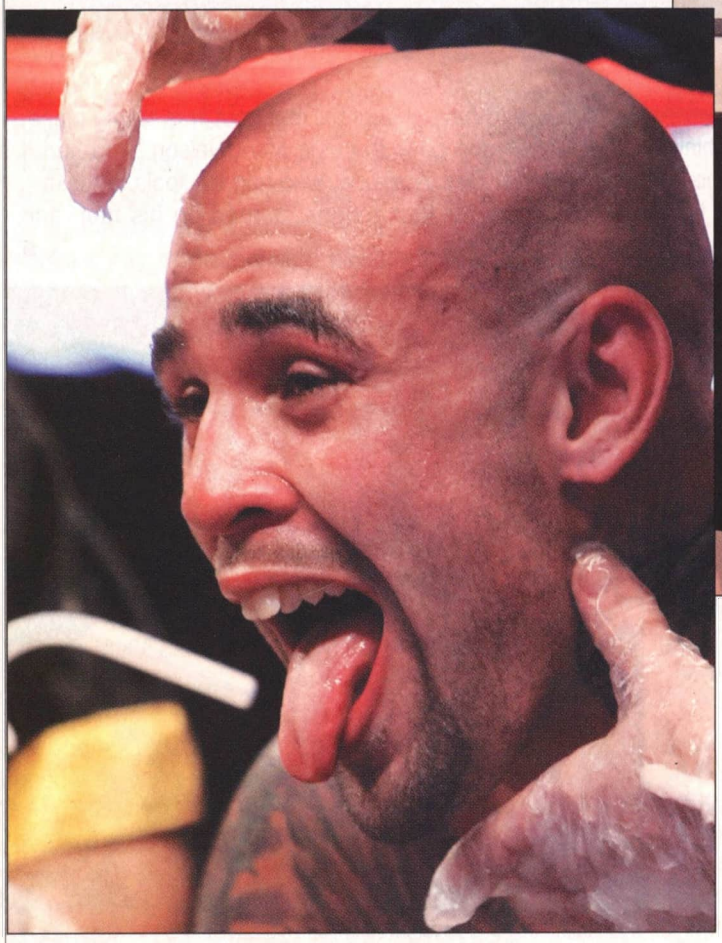


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

This is the pose Luis Collazo strikes when you ask him to show you the one part of his body that doesn't have a tattoo on it. The welterweight contender opened up and said "aaah" between rounds of his January 10-rounder against Edvan Barros, which Collazo won easily over the distance.

Hey, Wlad, when opponents tell you they're going to take you into deep waters and see if you drown, you don't have to take them so literally in your efforts to prove them wrong. Still, as far as gimmicky sports go, you have to admit: Wladimir Klitschko vs. another top heavyweight in an underwater boxing match is something you'd probably pay to see.

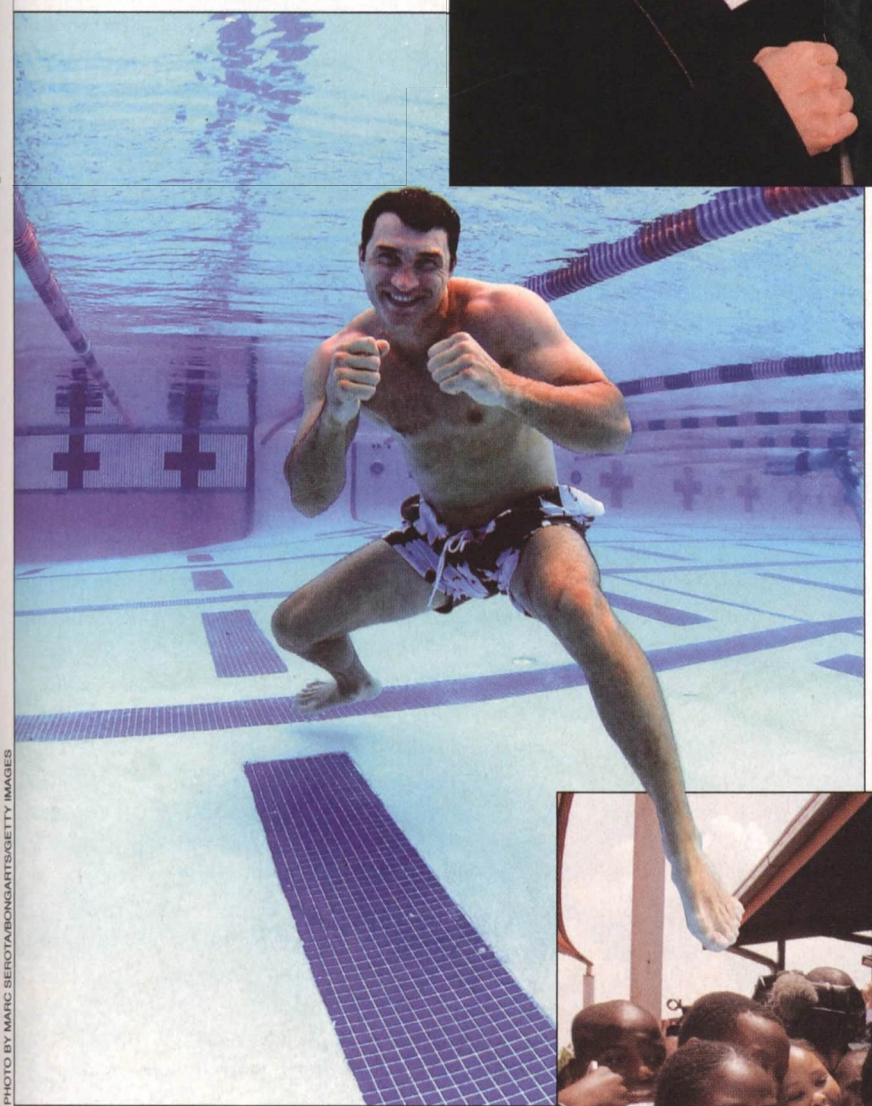


PHOTO BY MARC SEROTA/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY BENOIT PHOTO/COURTESY OF SHOWTIME

It isn't easy to make a junior featherweight feel big, but standing next to a jockey usually does the trick. That's 122-pound champ Israel Vazquez posing with jockey Alonso Quinonez at Santa Anita Park in February, shortly after Quinonez rode Intangaroo to victory in the Grade I Santa Monica Handicap.

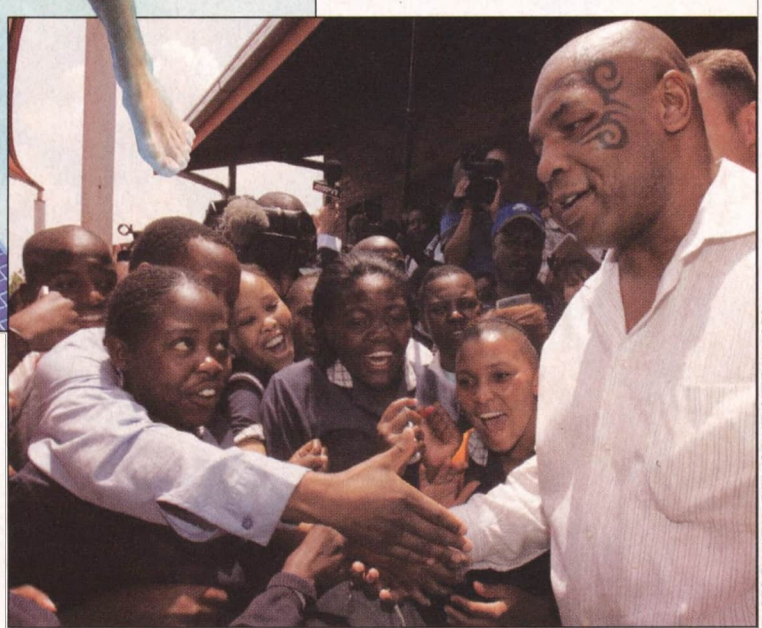


PHOTO BY ALEXANDER JOE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Mike Tyson's January visit to South Africa for a charity auction generated a fair amount of controversy, but these kids at the Moletsane Secondary School certainly don't seem opposed to having the former heavyweight champ around. All things considered, Tyson definitely enjoyed his trip to South Africa more than Lennox Lewis did six years ago.

By Joe Santoliquito

Miguel Angel Garcia Junior Lightweight

The calls from downstairs would come and Miguel "Mikey" Garcia would keep thumbing away at his Super Nintendo, sitting there at the edge of his bed, pretending not to hear as he punched out every champion fighter that ever existed. He was entranced by what he was doing—doing what kids do—and he knew darn well why he was being summoned.

Eduardo Garcia, his father, knew better than to push it, so did Mikey's older brother, Roberto. Mikey would get one, maybe two yells, "We're going to the gym, wanna come?" No answer. Just the constant clicking of two little hands. They knew every time they had to drag Mikey to the gym, he'd whine or cry about it. Or shield himself from everyone else and immerse himself in homework, shutting off the *whomp* of the heavybag or the staccato *pop-pop-pop* of the speedbag.

Then, one amateur exhibition tournament changed it all. Mikey was around 13 and there to watch his nephew, Javier Garcia, fight. Turns out one young boxer didn't have an opponent, that is until Roberto "volunteered" Mikey. On that day, Mikey learned that the Garcia boxing DNA was part of his genetic structure. That day, boxing—actual boxing—became part of his soul.

Pro Record

2006		
July 14	Domingo Mendoza, Montebello, CA	W 4
Aug. 12	Chad Gannigan, Las Vegas, NV	KO 1
Sept. 29	Mario Franco, Oxnard, CA	KO 2
Dec. 8	Baladan Trevizo, El Monte, CA	KO 1
2007		
Jan. 19	Frankie Martinez, Phoenix, AZ	KO 2
March 9	Gabriel Rangel, Hidalgo, TX	KO 2
April 27	Steve Trumble, Houston, TX	KO 2
May 25	Carlos Zambrano, Albuquerque, NM	KO 2
July 13	Reggie Sanders, Chicago, IL	KO 3
Sept. 20	Manuel Sarabia, Calabasas, CA	W 6
2008		
Feb. 16	Jorge Ruiz, Las Vegas	KO 5

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
11	11	0	0	9

Seven years later, Garcia is surrounded by everything a budding pro needs to succeed. He is trained by his brother Roberto, a former IBF junior lightweight titlist known as "Grandpa," and his father, Eduardo, a boxing lifer who trained Fernando Vargas. He is managed by 2007 Manager of the Year Cameron Dunkin. And he is promoted by Top Rank, which allows the undefeated featherweight to show his skills on the undercards of major fights, like the Kelly Pavlik-Jermain Taylor fight in mid-February.

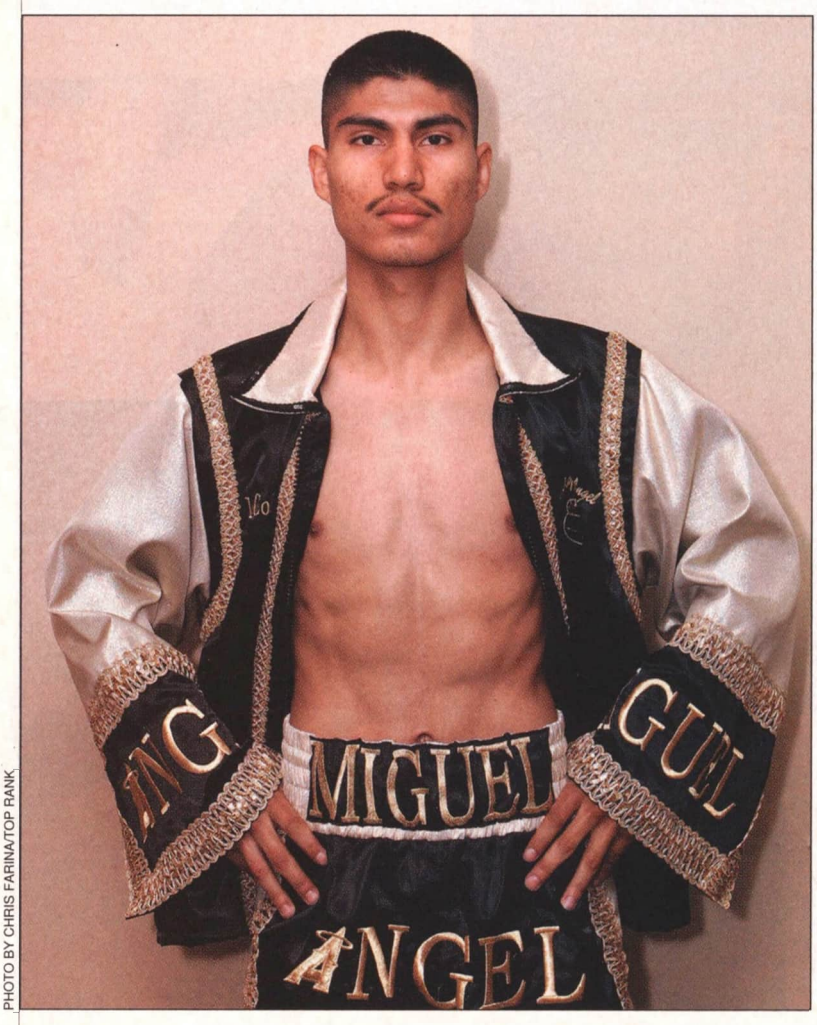


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

"The assumption was always there that I would get in the ring one day," said Mikey, the youngest of seven Garcia children. "My family has always been in the sport and I've been around boxing my whole life. I used to spar in my house with my nephews and cousins all the time. I'd have friends over when I was kid, or we'd play around in the backyard in our house in Oxnard. I remember my dad putting up a punching bag on the back porch area. We'd always watch fights on TV, or tapes of fights. There were gloves everywhere around the house. There was always something about boxing around me growing up."

Mikey couldn't accept it. He was reluctant to follow the same path of older brothers Daniel and Roberto, who pursued professional boxing careers. No, something else had a greater magnetic lure for him: video games. Mikey mastered everything—including boxing.

He created his own fighter he named

(Continued on Page122)

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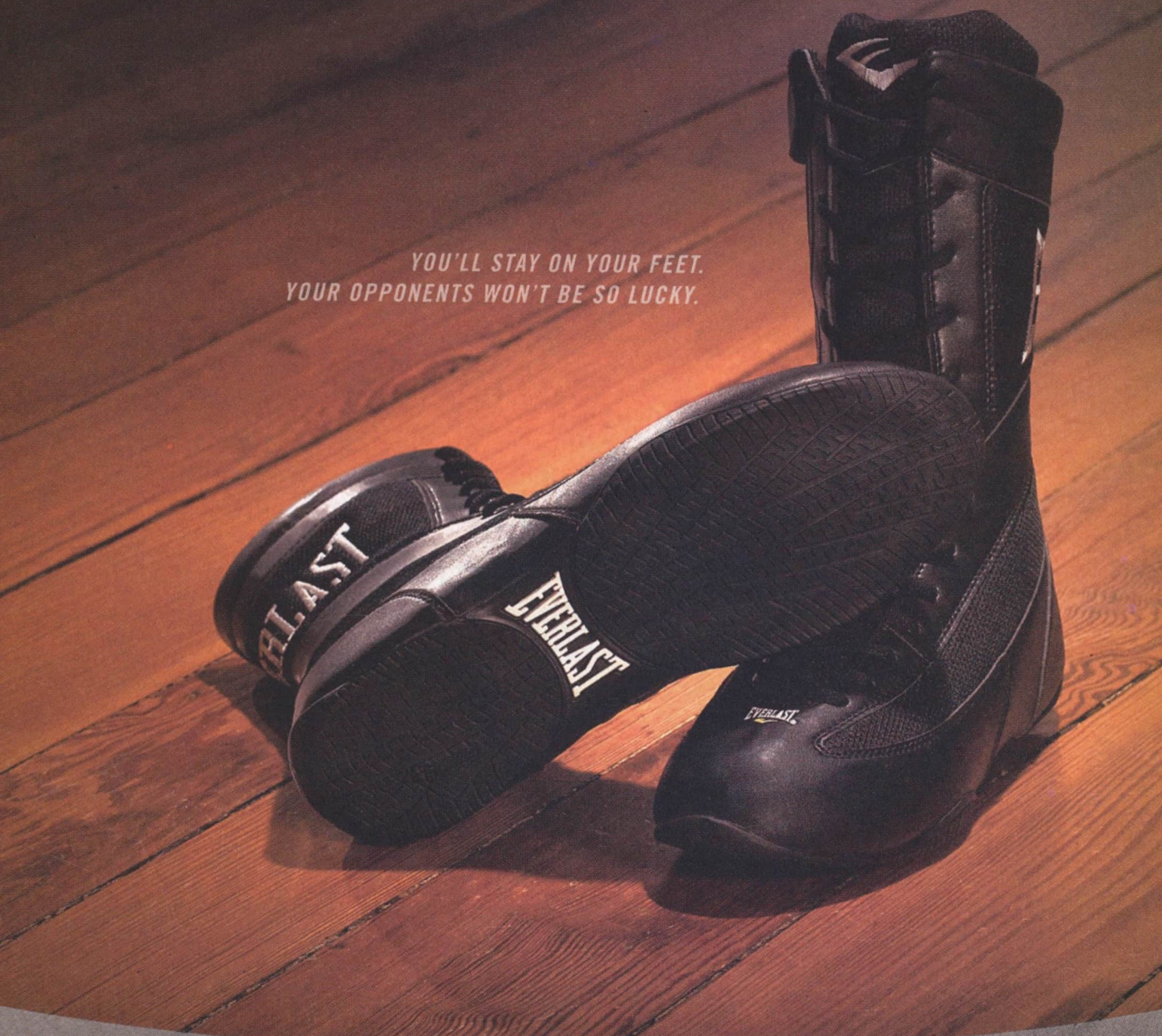

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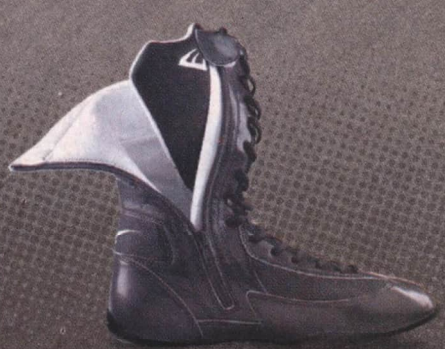

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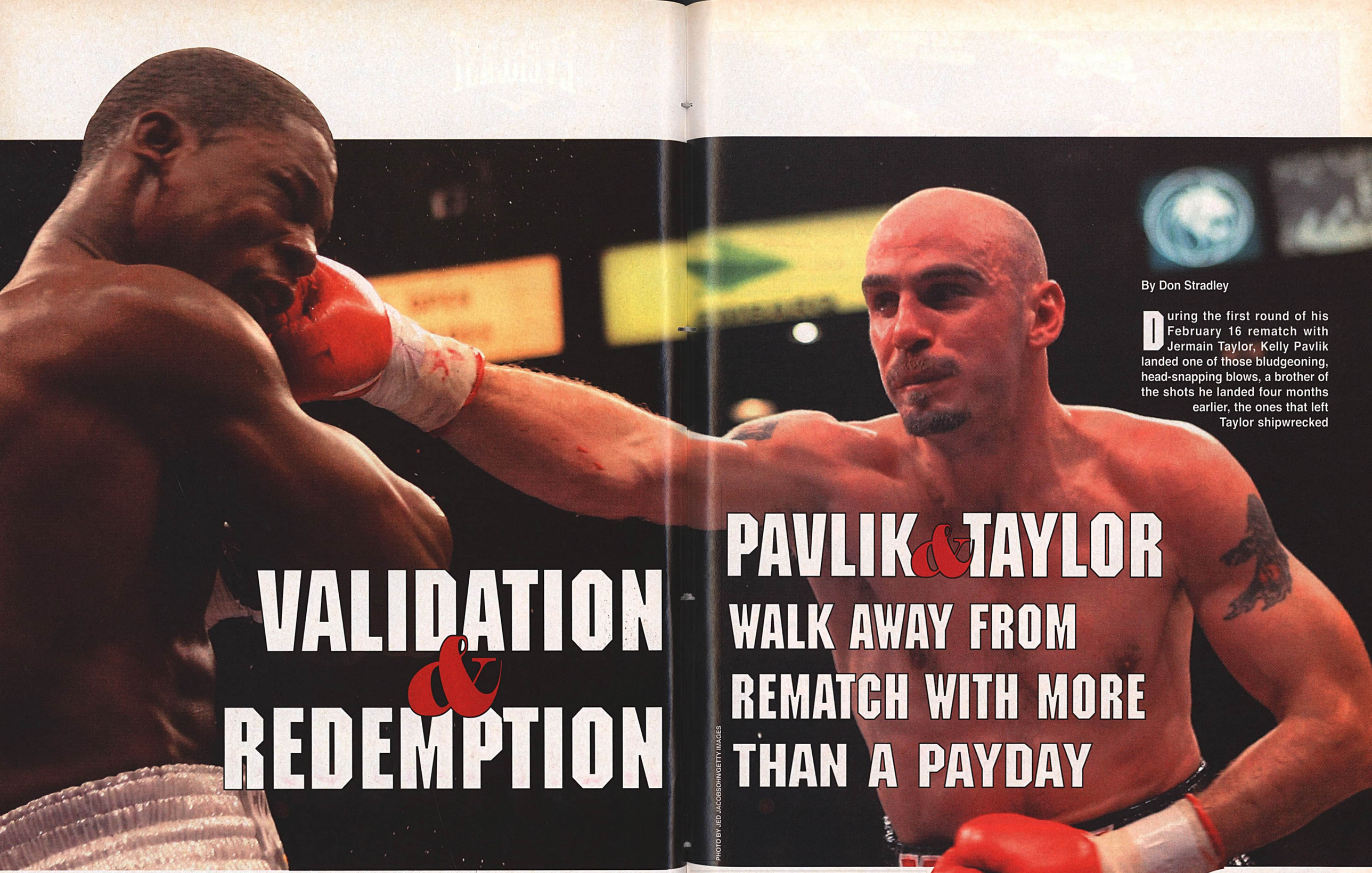

VALIDATION & REDEMPTION

PAVLIK & TAYLOR WALK AWAY FROM REMATCH WITH MORE THAN A PAYDAY

By Don Stradley

During the first round of his February 16 rematch with Jermain Taylor, Kelly Pavlik landed one of those bludgeoning, head-snapping blows, a brother of the shots he landed four months earlier, the ones that left Taylor shipwrecked

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

For a guy best known for his powerpunching, Pavlik is also a pretty decent boxer, illustrated here as he slips Taylor's jab and connects with one of his own. For a world champion, Pavlik is refreshingly willing to learn, so don't be surprised if he continues to improve.

without the middleweight title. When Pavlik connects with that big right hand, you can almost hear the sounds of long dead Ohio steel mills clanking back to life. Taylor survived the hard first round, surely wondering how this gangly fellow can hurt him so.

The rest of the fight followed a pattern, with Taylor moving backward, landing flurries, while Pavlik pressed forward behind an old-fashioned one-two. The surprise of the night was seeing Taylor's jab, long considered a thing of beauty, trumped by Pavlik's thudding, workmanlike jab.

For Taylor, Pavlik must be a bad dream. After all, Taylor had faced Bernard Hopkins (twice), and Winky Wright, two of the era's finest. Plus, Taylor looks in the mirror and sees a physical specimen built for action. When he looks at Pavlik, he sees a pigeon-chested guy who, if he walked into a Hollywood casting office for a role in a boxing movie, would be laughed out of the room. Unfortunately for Taylor, the unassuming Pavlik can punch like the devil. He can box a little too. How frustrating must it be for Taylor to be knocked out by Pavlik, return with a good boxing plan, and then be outboxed by Pavlik?

After winning a 12-round unanimous decision in their non-title bout, Pavlik said, "I hope everyone enjoyed it. I had to use my brain and change my tactics. He sat and slid off the ropes, he was trying to counter over my jab. I thought my single jab landed a lot, but my double jab didn't. I felt I won the first round, and lost the second through the 6th, and won again from the 7th on. I felt a little stiff."

Pavlik can be excused for feeling stiff. After all, this fight couldn't have been easy for him. Much was made of Taylor having to face a man who had already knocked him out, and the mental pressures that would entail. But Pavlik, too, was under pressure.

Just one year ago Pavlik, now 33-0 (29), was headlining at the FedEx Forum in Memphis. Now he was headlining at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. Having become the most talked-about new fighter since Manny Pacquiao grabbed our attention in 2004, Pavlik has been receiving the kind of attention that can wilt a fighter. But Pavlik is taking the star trip in stride. Top Rank provided Pavlik with a prime Las Vegas luxury suite, but he chose to sleep on the couch. If that's not a sign of a guy blowing off fame, what is? (Of course, sleeping on a couch may account for his feeling a little stiff.)

It's also rare that a fighter can follow one brilliant performance with another. How could Pavlik possibly match the drama of last September? Judging by his methodical performance in the rematch, he didn't intend to.

"I thought we both fought a great fight," said Pavlik. "He was better tonight than the first fight, but I was better too. Nothing is as satisfying as the first one because that was for the world title. But to beat a world champion like Jermain Taylor twice is quite an achievement."

During the rematch we learned that Pavlik can go 12 rounds with a top fighter like Taylor; he doesn't come unglued during intense fights, he can absorb punches, and on a night when he doesn't have his best stuff, he can stay focused and grind out a win. Judges Patricia Jarman, Dave Moretti, and Glenn Trowbridge all scored the bout for Pavlik by tallies of 115-113, 117-111, and 116-112, respectively. THE RING also had it for Pavlik, 115-113.

Bob Arum has already started comparing Pavlik to past middleweight greats—that's a promoter's job—but whether Pavlik is the new Carlos Monzon or not, the middleweight division suddenly has a champion who every fan can get behind. When was the last time we had one of those? Taylor was cursed with that terrible word—potential—but he rarely delivered. Taylor's predecessor, Hopkins, was crafty, but since knocking out Felix Trinidad in 2001, often dull. In Pavlik, we have a middleweight king who comes to fight. And having fought Taylor at an agreed-upon catchweight of 166 (both came in at 164), Pavlik will now return to middleweight.

"The middleweight title is something you don't give up unless you absolutely can't make weight anymore," said Arum, who namedropped Irish John Duddy and Felix Trinidad as possible opponents for Pavlik. Arum envisions blockbuster nights at Madison Square Garden in New York, which is smarter than trying to turn Pavlik into a Las Vegas treat. The MGM Grand crowd was a little thin at 9,706—the distance and the Las Vegas prices may have kept Pavlik's blue-collar crowd away. Duddy is a good choice: He's popular in New York and fights with his face. Trinidad is less likely, and less deserving. Still, it's nice to hear Pavlik mentioned in the big money mix.

Part of the joy we're taking in Pavlik is

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

Taylor rallied during the middle rounds and seemed to pull even going into the final two rounds. But Pavlik hurt the former middleweight champ with a bodyshot in the 11th and outworked Taylor in the 12th to remain undefeated.

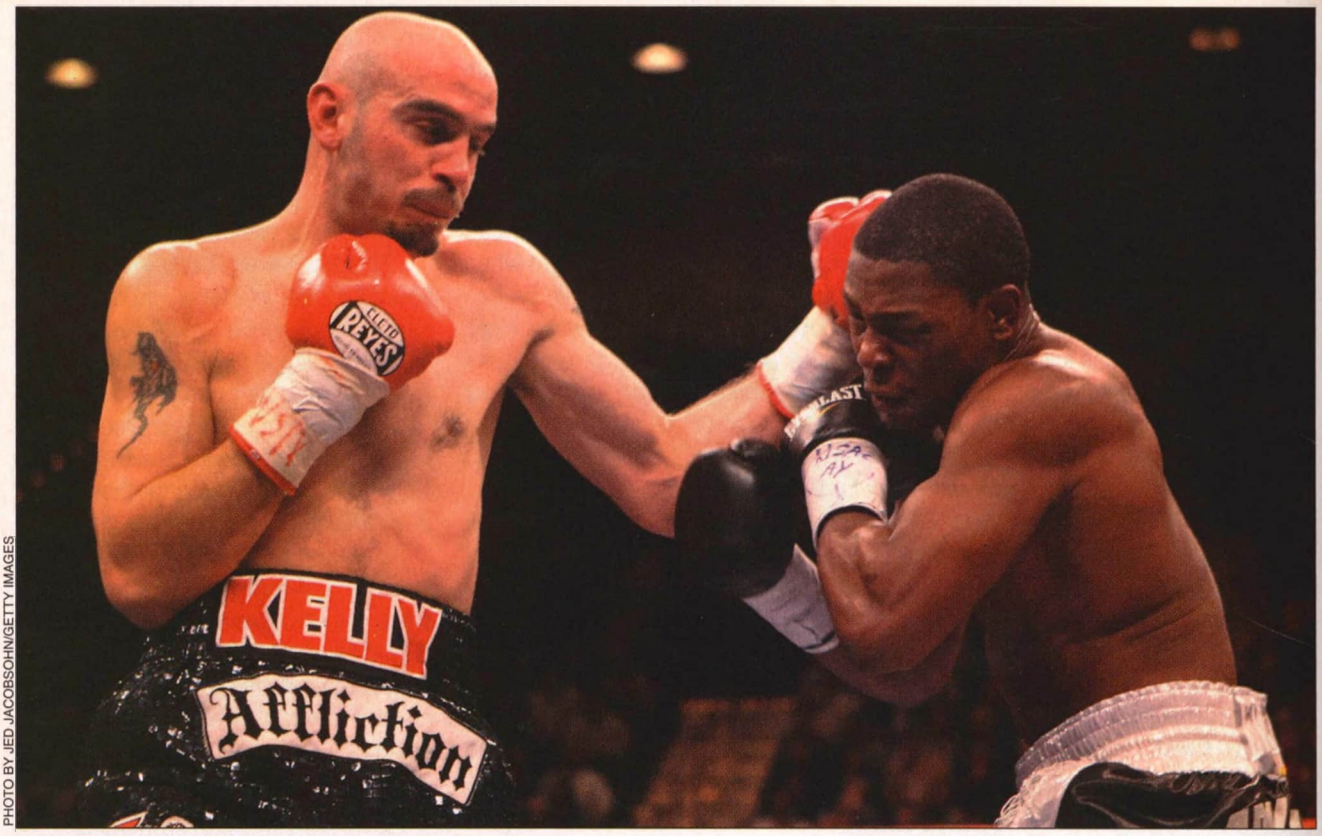

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

Although Pavlik's main weapons were the jab and right hand, he banged home a few left hooks as well. He could not, however, inflict the kind of punishment that led to Taylor being stopped in the seventh round of their first fight.

because he's a lovable lug who doesn't let us down. In their dramatic first bout, when Taylor rattled him, there was a sense of *here we go, now the truth comes out.* But Pavlik didn't fold. In the rematch, when Taylor dug in, Pavlik came through again. He'd learned from the first bout, didn't make too many mistakes, and walked through Taylor's best punches.

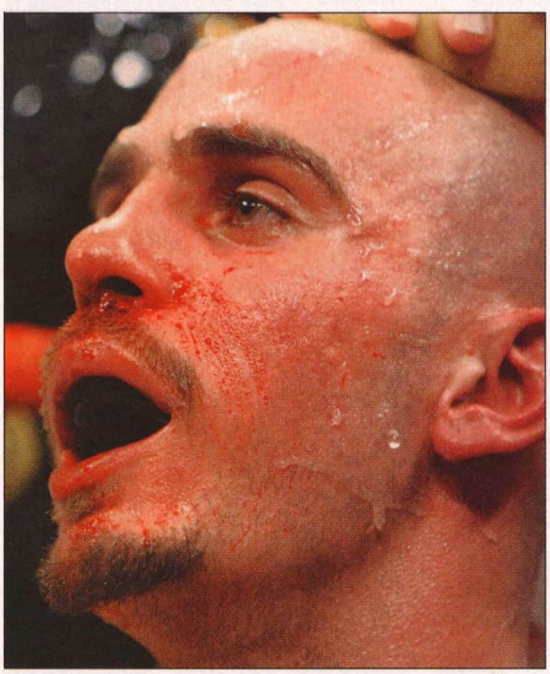

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

Pavlik certainly knew he'd been in a fight, and said afterward that he felt both he and Taylor fought better than they had in September 2007. But although he suffered a bloody nose, Pavlik walked through Taylor's best shots and had enough left to finish strongly.

The rematch wasn't a classic, but it was a nail-biter. Taylor, 27-2-1 (17), landed some withering shots of his own—a few ringsiders believed the decision could've gone either way—but in the end he was outfought. By the fifth round Taylor's nose was bleeding, and by the 10th he was visibly tiring, and his right eye was swelling. During the final rounds Pavlik crashed some hard blows into Taylor's body, and the Arkansas native could only hang on.

"He did catch me, he hurt me with a bodyshot in the 11th round," said Taylor. "I could have did things a lot different, but he had a great fight all the way around. I give it to him."

Those looking for flaws in Pavlik consider him a one-dimensional, slow-moving fighter, but that one dimension is good enough that he'll be hard to beat at 160. And don't be surprised if Pavlik adds something to his arsenal. Against Taylor he stuck with long-range punches because Taylor was staying on the outside, but in the future, Pavlik may add a hook, or improve his ability to cut off the ring. Moreover, he's game to learn.

"I'll fight anybody," Pavlik said. "That's one thing I have to give Jermain. He wanted the rematch immediately and that's how I felt too. I'll fight anybody. That's what makes the sport better."

The night belonged to Pavlik, but in a way, Taylor redeemed himself. It's not that Taylor fought particularly well. He was the same Taylor he has always been. He's perpetually stuck in his B game. We don't even know if he has an A game. Taylor has some kind of mental block. Replace his brain with the brain of, say, Ray Leonard, Marvin Hagler, or even Nigel Benn, and Taylor might very well have beaten Pavlik. Early in his career, during a meeting

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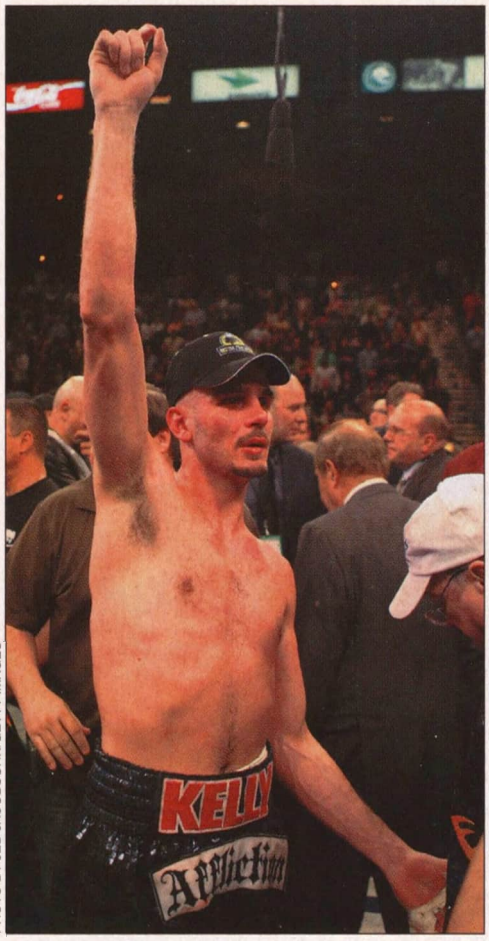

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

Pavlik celebrates his 33rd straight win and career-high payday following the second Taylor match. Now the popular middleweight champion will drop back down to 160 and defend the title.

with HBO's Jim Lampley, Taylor confided that he and his wife, Erica, a basketball player, often discussed killer instinct, and how to summon it. We can't imagine Hagler having the same discussion with his wife.

How Taylor redeemed himself had to do with our own image of him. We'd been victims of Madison Avenue thinking, and like a bunch of young girls choosing the next *American Idol* winner, boxing writers and fans alike banked on Taylor because he simply looked the part. Even when he struggled with smaller opponents, the most we did was chuckle at how Lou DiBella's bonus baby was underachieving. DiBella carped that no one respected Taylor, but many people held firm in their belief that Taylor would grow into the greatness predicted for him.

Part of the problem was that money was shoveled toward Taylor long before he deserved it. Consider that Kelly Pavlik had to knock out Jermain Taylor before he could get a big money fight ... with Jermain Taylor. That's making it the hard way. But Taylor was a rich fighter without ever being a poor one. True, he'd grown up poor in Arkansas, but as an athlete he has always been on the fast track. He kept telling us, "I've still got a lot to learn," but before he could learn it, along came HBO, and endorsement deals, and two hair-thin decisions over Hopkins. Somehow, Taylor had achieved his end result without walking through the fire to get there.

Charles Haanel, one of the early self-help gurus, said in 1912, "Premature wealth is but the forerunner of humiliation and disaster, because we cannot permanently retain anything we do not merit or which we have not earned." Cumbersome words, but in Taylor's case, the humiliation came in our growing disappointment. The disaster came last year when Pavlik kayoed him in Atlantic City.

We can't be disappointed in Taylor anymore, because now we know what he is. He's Michael Nunn. He's Mark Breland. He's every well-groomed hopeful who falls a bit short. That doesn't mean he's not a good fighter. He's just not a great one.

Still, who wouldn't want to see Taylor against Sakio Bika, Edison Miranda, Jeff Lacy, or Allan Green? If Taylor gets past one or more of those fighters, there could be a second leg to his career. With Joe Calzaghe moving on to 175, there may be a vacant championship at 168 that Taylor could fight for. And with DiBella still thinking of Taylor as a moneymaker, we might even see Taylor against the not-quite-irrelevant Roy Jones. We may even start liking Taylor, which would be a nice change of pace.

An emotional Taylor told HBO's Larry Merchant that he felt he had done enough to beat Pavlik on points, but later in the evening he told a press gathering that he didn't want to take anything away from Pavlik. "I remember when Bernard Hopkins did it after our fight," said Taylor.

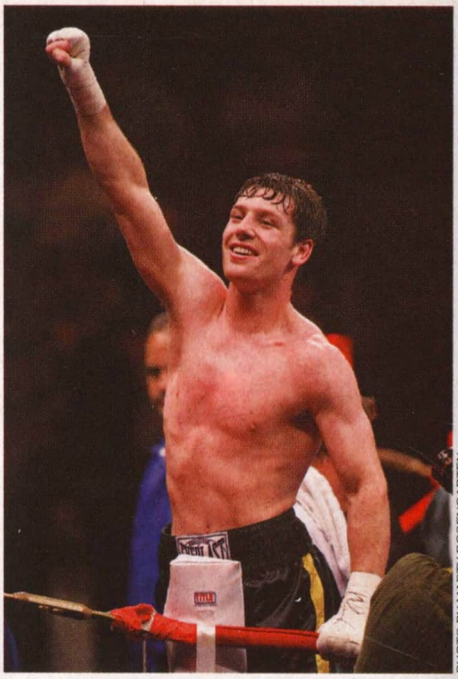

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Is unbeaten John Duddy next for Pavlik? Promoter Bob Arum envisions a capacity crowd at Madison Square Garden for a match between the Pavlik and the popular Irishman. The faded Tito Trinidad has also been mentioned as a possible challenger, but Duddy seems to have the inside track.

"He took some glory away. Let him be happy, the man is the middleweight champion of the world. Let him enjoy it. I knew it was a close fight, but I guess he won the last couple of rounds. He's a strong fighter, and I give him a lot of credit." Taylor was also overheard telling well-wishers, "I lost. I lost."

DiBella added that we haven't seen the end of the Pavlik-Taylor rivalry. "This fight will happen again sometime in the future," said DiBella. "For now Jermain will rest and in about a month we'll talk about it. HBO has already let us know Jermain's next fight will be on HBO and it will be at 168 pounds."

A third go 'round? Don't dismiss the idea. Beyond Duddy, what is there for Pavlik at 160? Germany's Arthur Abraham? Felix Sturm? The bloated Ricardo Mayorga? The aging and no longer trendy Winky Wright? Pavlik may try 168 sooner than Arum thinks. A third bout with Taylor is a real possibility. Maybe by then, Taylor's wife will have taught him something about killer instinct. ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and a regular contributor to THE RING.

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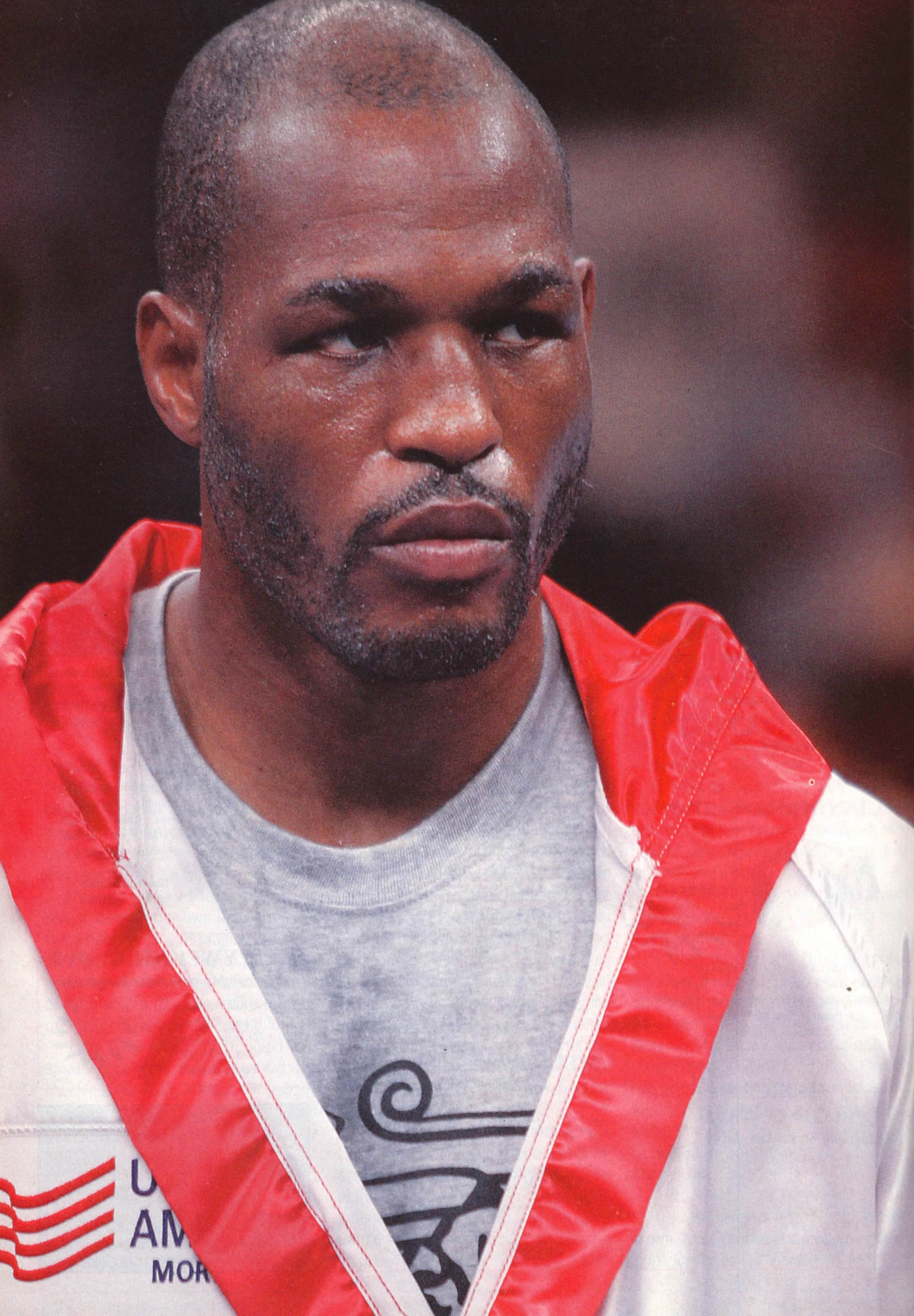


Why I'll Beat Calzaghe

By Bernard Hopkins
PHOTOS BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Don't underestimate Bernard Hopkins.

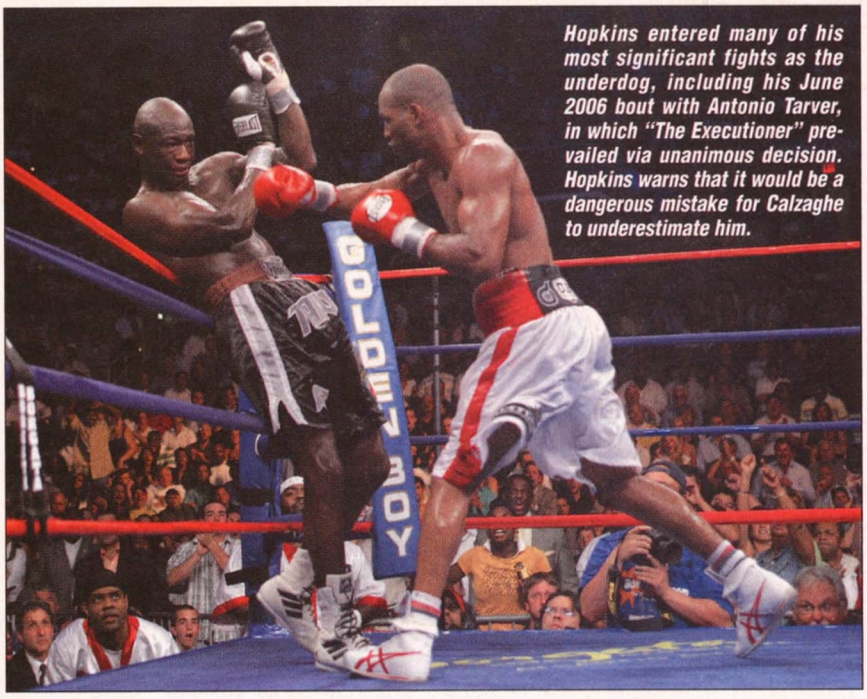
At the end of the day, you can pick me to win or lose. What I'm saying is, don't underestimate me. I have a track record that clearly shows, loud and clear, don't underestimate Bernard Hopkins. I've always been a spoiler.

For Joe Calzaghe to get introduced to this country, the best thing is to do it on *HBO Championship Boxing* against a well-known opponent. But like I messed up the Antonio Tarver plans with him and Joe, like I messed up the Roy Jones fight six years ago with him and "Tito" Trinidad, like I messed up the Winky Wright fight with Joe, and like I damaged Jermain Taylor, who will never be the same after those two fights, I'm going to mess up something else. See, they can't get rid of me unless I legitimately lose.

I'm not going anywhere, because not only am I going to beat Joe Calzaghe, I'm going to punish him, and his father's going to have to be a father and want to save his son for another day. I love to fight a fighter who has his biological father in the ring. It brings me back to Tito and the Trinidad family. That's one of the things amongst a lot of other things that motivates me: I get a chance to make a father save his son.

Not only will I punish Calzaghe, but he's also going to have the lowest work rate he's ever had in his career. I'm going to neutralize everything. I'm going to take away his biggest weapons: his speed, his punch output. When I take that, he's done. He's homeless. He's finished. It's like the Big Bad Wolf blowing the house down.

I have a quality track record for experience and versatility. I believe I have all the lessons from A to Z. My talent, to me, surpasses anything that Joe can bring to the table. On



Hopkins entered many of his most significant fights as the underdog, including his June 2006 bout with Antonio Tarver, in which "The Executioner" prevailed via unanimous decision. Hopkins warns that it would be a dangerous mistake for Calzaghe to underestimate him.

an all-around report card, he has a B, and I have an A. I believe, at the end of the day, the talent will show that Bernard Hopkins is not only a better fighter than Joe, but also a slicker, old-school throwback type of fighter that will punish you.

Where do I have an A and he has a B? One is that even with his aggressive, high-energy rate of punching, he leaves himself more vulnerable than Winky Wright did. I'd rather fight a person that throws punches than a person that you have to force to throw punches, because you have to take something out of the cage while the cage is closed. It can't be reckless. You have to be really skillful. By no means am I saying that I haven't done that before; I have. But the risks are higher than with a guy that has the gate open and invites you to try to take it.

And that's what it comes down to: who can strike before the other strikes. While he's punching, I'm punching at the right time and the right place, and then he will have to change his style. And that's what the fight is going to come down to, who can change the other guy's style and get him out of his comfort zone.

His hand speed isn't any different that Oscar De La Hoya, my partner, when I fought him. It isn't any different than when I fought Winky Wright, who had a history-making punch output when he fought Ike Quartey. So Calzaghe throws a lot of punches. That's not unique to me.

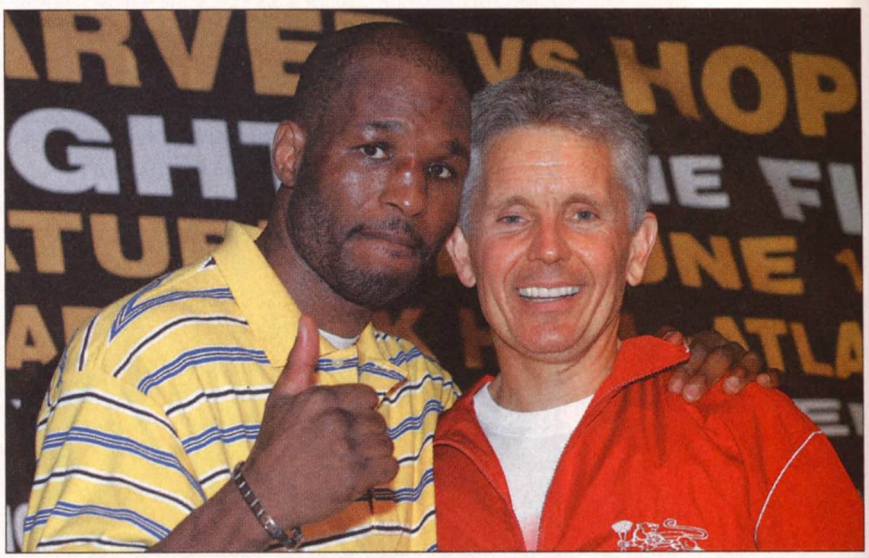
A guy who was fast when he was in his prime was Sugar Ray Leonard. That's fast. Muhammad Ali, that's fast for a heavyweight. Joe just throws a lot of punches. That doesn't mean fast. And if he throws a lot of punches, then he's subjected to being hit with something. You'll see Bernard Hopkins be the great counterpuncher that I'm dubbed to be by most. You'll see Bernard Hopkins make Calzaghe adapt to his style. I got a track record of making guys fight my fight.

If you look at my résumé and you look at his résumé, and you look at the names on his side and you look at the names on my side, I'm the first future Hall of Famer that he's fighting. What does that tell you? I fought six or seven or maybe nine or 10 of them!

I guess you can look at Calzaghe's situation as someone who has been blown up more than others. It reminds me of Larry Bird. Great basketball player, but did he get his notoriety based and predicated on how he could play, or that he can play more than the average guy his color can play? White athletes stand out more and they get more of the attention because they seem to be somewhat more special than the norm.

Calzaghe has some fighters on his record that were champions, could have been champions, or whatever the case may be. But he fought all his fights in Europe. This is a different ballgame here. This is the United States of America, the Mecca of boxing credibility. And that's why you need to come over here to get that credibility. Hey, even basketball players that don't make the NBA go to Europe to play over there, hoping they'll play well enough to eventually get picked up over here.

Joe Calzaghe is the guy that I have to beat to show the Brits that we are stronger and better. And even though their pound has more value than my dollar, their fighting talent isn't better.



Hopkins poses with fitness guru Mackie Shilstone, who helped him in his transformation from middleweight to light heavyweight leading up to 'Nard's title-winning fight with Tarver. Shilstone will be working with Hopkins again for the Calzaghe fight.

I have to prove that and I will prove it. See, when I go in the ring I have to have a purpose. And right now, the Brits gave me a major purpose. Yeah, they booed the national anthem, but they're going to be booing something else when it's all said and done and my hand is raised in victory.

They're always going to be second to us as far as I'm concerned. When April 19 comes, Bernard Hopkins will resurrect "The Mongoose," Archie Moore. The 43-year-old "Mongoose" pulling the tricks out of his bag, neutralizing the speed and the punches and all this dramatic stuff that people say Joe does. He's ordinary. Because he didn't come from the hood or he didn't come from the ghetto, all of a sudden he's special? Come on with that nonsense.

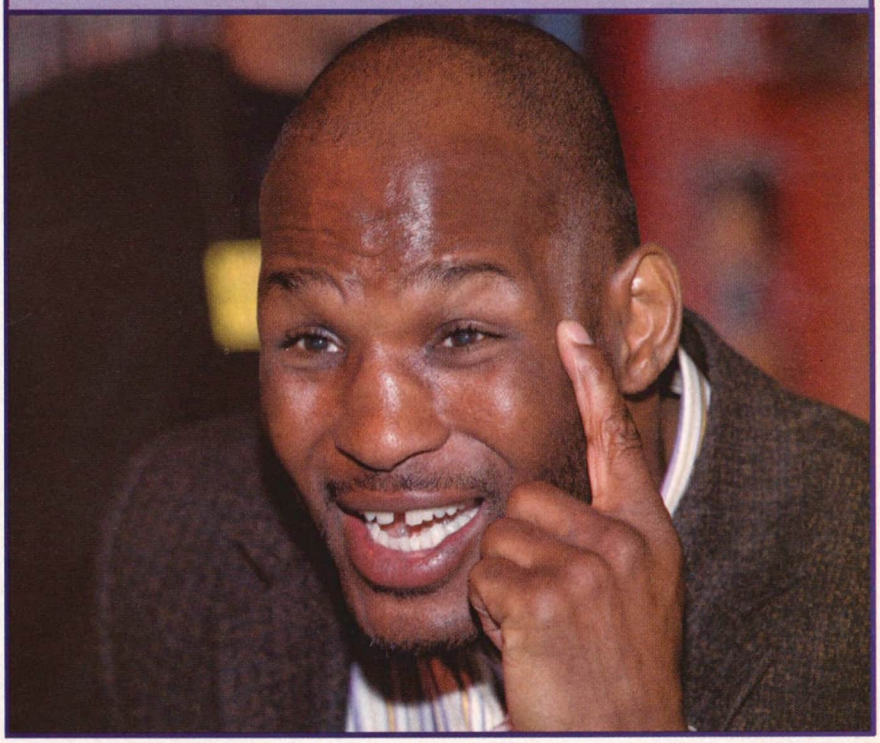
I'm bringing out, at every press conference, the good and bad in everybody. I'm going to push some buttons. I can't tell you everything I'm going to say. But there's going to be some buttons pushed I really don't have to do anything to sell the fight, because this is a free fight that easily could have been on pay-per-view.

In training camp, I'm going to get in there with some quick, fast, high-profile amateur athletes that throw a lot of punches at me. I believe that's the type of style that I'm going to see. The wrong person will read that and say, "Oh, you're calling him an amateur." No, you're not hearing what I'm saying.

An amateur is taught that the way to go to the Olympics is to do what Joe does: outworks you with lots of punches. He bewilders you with punches. He overshadows you with punches. You try to hit him with one or two punches, and he's throwing six. It's little BB shots against a shotgun, if the shotgun doesn't land, the BB shots add up.

I have to outdo his work rate and make him think. I have to put him in the state of mind where he's saying to himself, *I normally like to throw a lot of punches, but this guy hit me with something and I have to be reluctant now.* I just need him to think. That one little hairline second of thinking throws you off if you're not used to thinking before you do what you do. It takes you out of your comfort zone.

"While he's punching, I'm punching at the right time and the right place, and then he will have to change his style. And that's what the fight's going to come down to: Who can change the other guy's style and get him out of his comfort zone."



I see the fight being tough early on. I honestly do. Joe will be fighting to keep his record without a loss, fighting to prove to America that he deserves our respect. So off those emotions and off those talents that he does bring to the table, it's going to be a tough, strategic, high-work rate fight on both ends.

I'm bringing in Mackie Shilstone, the same guy I brought in for Tarver. This is for a reason. Trust me, I know what I need for certain fights and what I don't need for certain fights. Bernard Hopkins is going to look like a welterweight when it comes to punching. The body is going to look like a cruiserweight, but the punch output is going to be historic for what I used to fight like. At the end of the day, "The Professor" will do his job. "The Executioner" will do his job.

Joe isn't going in there with the average guy, and he doesn't think he's going in there with a regular guy. He's very smart.

But I'll have to remind him anyway.■

Bernard Hopkins, 48-4-1 (32), is THE RING light heavyweight champion of the world.

Why I'll Beat Hopkins

By Joe Calzaghe

I was sitting in the MGM Grand in Las Vegas last December, experiencing the incredible atmosphere generated by thousands of British fans, and the experience convinced me that I didn't want to finish my career without boxing at least once in America. I'd made this decision some time ago—after years of being worried about stepping on a plane—but being there when Floyd Mayweather and Ricky Hatton came to the ring just cemented things in my mind: *I want some of this, no question.* It's not that I feel I have anything to prove—my record speaks for itself—but I want to have that kind of experience and feel that energy inside the arena, which made the hairs on the back of my neck stand on end.

Bernard Hopkins, as every boxing fan probably knows, got my attention during the trip. We were both in the media center a few hours before the weigh-in. He walked by and I said to him something like, "When are we going to fight?" He stepped into my face and the pantomime began with him saying something about messing up my face. "Over 25 years of boxing and I still have this face for a reason," I told him. "Because you've boxed in Europe," he replied.

Apparently, he didn't think too much of Mikkel Kessler, who I outpointed last November in front of 50,000 people in Cardiff, roughly the same number of people who have watched Hopkins in his entire career. "Not in my league," he reckoned. Well, we'll soon find out what league Hopkins is in these days.

He calls himself a legend, but he's no legend in my eyes. I give him all the respect that he's due. For years he held a belt at middleweight, and not many people took notice or gave him credit. That's a situation I can totally relate to. Then he beat Felix Trinidad and Oscar De La Hoya, little

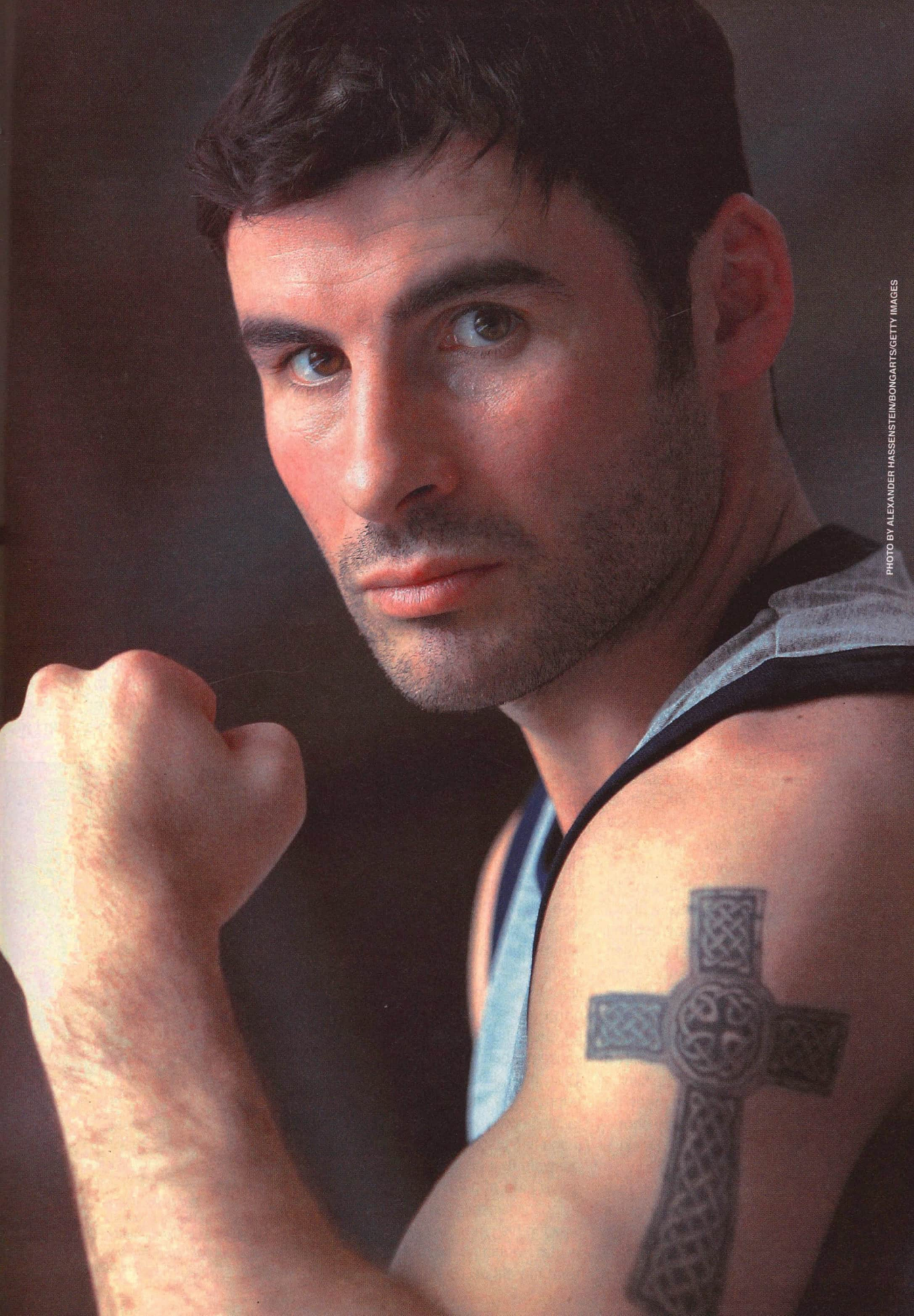


PHOTO BY ALEXANDER HASSENSTEIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

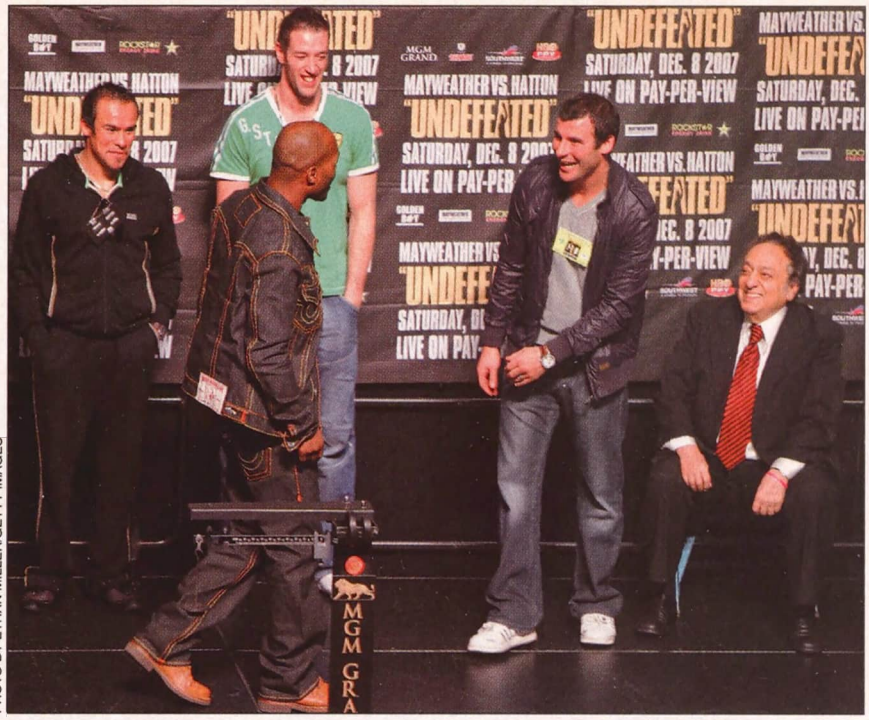


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Hopkins and Calzaghe trade insults at the Floyd Mayweather-Ricky Hatton weigh-in at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. Calzaghe claims that, unlike so many of "The Executioner's" opponents, he will not be rattled by B-Hop's trash talk and head games.

guys moving up from welterweight, and all of a sudden he was being spoken about as the best pound-for-pound boxer in the world. For beating two guys who were fighting out of their weight division? Look at their records and tell me what De La Hoya and Trinidad ever achieved as middleweights and why I should be impressed by the fact that Hopkins beat them. It's a myth, just as his defeat of Antonio Tarver has been turned into something that it simply isn't. A monumental achievement? Beating a guy who did absolutely nothing for 12 rounds and fought like he was scared? A guy who made his name by beating a washed-up Roy Jones, just like Glen Johnson did? If Johnson and Tarver were so great, why was Johnson losing a dozen fights during the prime years of his career and why was Tarver fighting nobody? Sylvester Stallone floored Tarver with a bodyshot during the filming of *Rocky Balboa*—and I don't mean for the cameras, it was a legitimate shot—so that's how good Tarver is. Rocky's 61 years old!

Besides, Hopkins has lost four times and he has a draw on his record against a guy I've never heard of. So let's have a bit of perspective on all this "legend" bulls___. I'm certainly not overly impressed. If he thinks he can intimidate me with all that nonsense, he's barking up the wrong tree. Ricky lost his cool and forgot his game plan against Mayweather because he allowed Mayweather to get under his skin. He got angry, but I'm a different animal. I've got the temperament to cope with all of these mind games that Hopkins will try to play.

When he said "I would never let a white boy beat me" during our little faceoff in the MGM's media center, I just stood and smiled right back. I wasn't offended by the remark. Why should I be? It was a stupid comment for an adult to make. He made an idiot of himself, which is fine by me. If he wants to play the pantomime villain, that's better for business than if he was to just shake my hand and give me a hug. Then nobody would give a s___. I don't know whether or not he's a racist. I don't think he is, not if I'm to judge him just on that comment. It's possible that he was trying to gain some kind of psychological edge, trying to intimidate me. Well, he was wasting his time, because the truth is that I would never let a white boy beat me either, or someone who's green, blue, black, yellow, orange, or multi-colored. It means a lot to me to have a zero on the end of my record. I've never lost to a fighter of any color and I don't intend to.

I know that as long as the best Joe Calzaghe turns up on fight night, no one can beat me, not even what's-his-name, Mary Popkins. I've never been a fan and I don't watch his fights. If I had to sit up into the early hours at home just to watch him box live in the United States, I know that I'd fall asleep. In fact, I did when he fought Winky Wright—who was another little guy moving up in weight, by the way. I tried to watch the fight again, as I recorded it, but I couldn't make it all the way through. It was poor, tedious, totally uninteresting. I could see a lot of grappling, but not a lot of punching. I guess that's what he's got to do at 43.

He fights dirty, he tries to spoil, he wants to put you off your game. Against Winky, he'd throw his right hand and then he'd throw his head in behind it. He headbutted Winky twice and got away with it, so I'm hoping that the referee will do his job on April 19. I'd prefer to see him come to fight, but I'll be prepared for whatever comes my way. I'm a much better boxer than I was

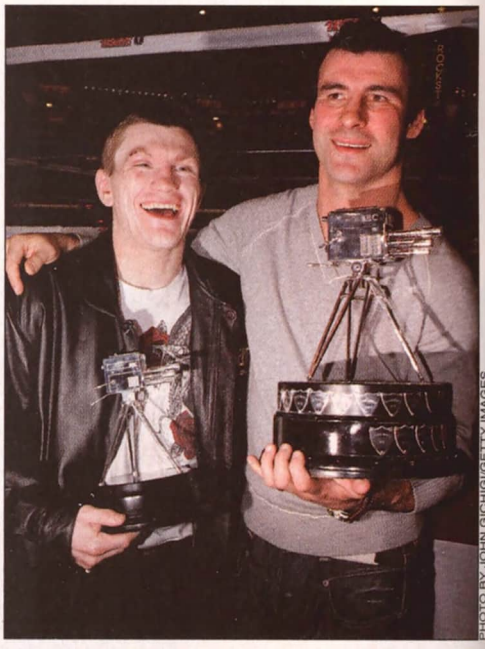


PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Calzaghe and fellow Brit Ricky Hatton show off their BBC Sports Personality of the Year Awards, an annual contest in which Calzaghe took top honors in 2007. Joe says tips from Hatton about fighting in the U.S. have been helpful in preparing him for his first bout in America.

"When [Hopkins] said 'I would never let a white boy beat me' during our little face-off in the MGM's media center, I just stood and smiled right back. I wasn't offended by the remark. Why should I be? It was a stupid comment for an adult to make. He made an idiot of himself, which is fine by me."

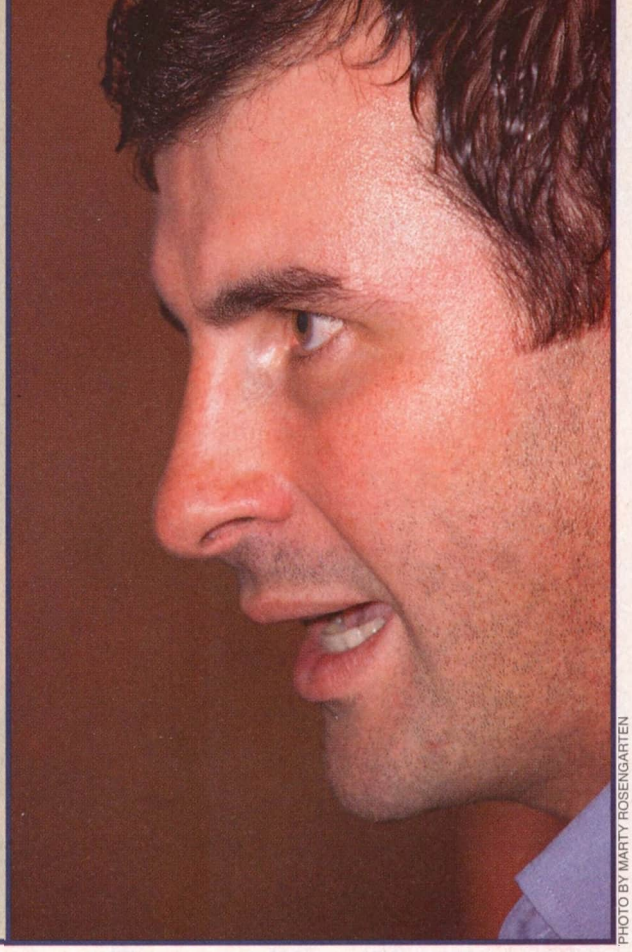


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

10 years ago. Against Charles Brewer, another old-school Philadelphian fighter whom I boxed in 2002, I took too many risks. I wasn't as controlled and efficient and I wasn't as confident as I am now. I was confident—I've always believed in myself—but my victories over Jeff Lacy and Kessler have brought it to a new level. The fight against Sakio Bika, a physically strong guy who would give any fighter at the weight a tough fight, was an example of what can happen sometimes when I try to beat a guy at his own game. When I'm on my game, no one can live with me.

Hopkins has never faced a fighter like me. I'm 36 years old, but the way I feel I could keep going until I'm 40. The Kessler fight only happened because I made it happen. I begged for the Kessler fight because it was the most difficult fight out there. In the fourth round, I stood toe-to-toe with him and, if I'd continued to do that, I would probably have been beaten. He was a better puncher than me, a harder puncher, but I made the right adjustments and that was the key. I've learned what I've had to do in this business over many years.

When I was younger, I used to have a devastating left hand. You can't drop Chris Eubank, as I did in the opening round when I won the WBO super middleweight title in 1997, and not be a massive puncher. But I've had to adapt down the years because my hands, my left hand, in particular, have given me serious problems. Touching my left hand actually hurts, so I've adjusted and refined my style. I train for speed, and speed wins fights. If you look at fighters who have moved up through the weights and been successful, they've all possessed great speed, which has always been one of my greatest assets. It's the magic ingredient in all great fighters, and I have that advantage over any super middle or light heavyweight in the world. I can't see Hopkins being able to throw 1,000 punches in this fight. He's going to have to try to come up with something else, but he'll have to do it with 1,000 punches flying into his face. If I box like I did against Kessler, I'll beat Hopkins by simply outboxing him. Sometimes I get involved in a scrap, but that only gives a chance to the other guy.

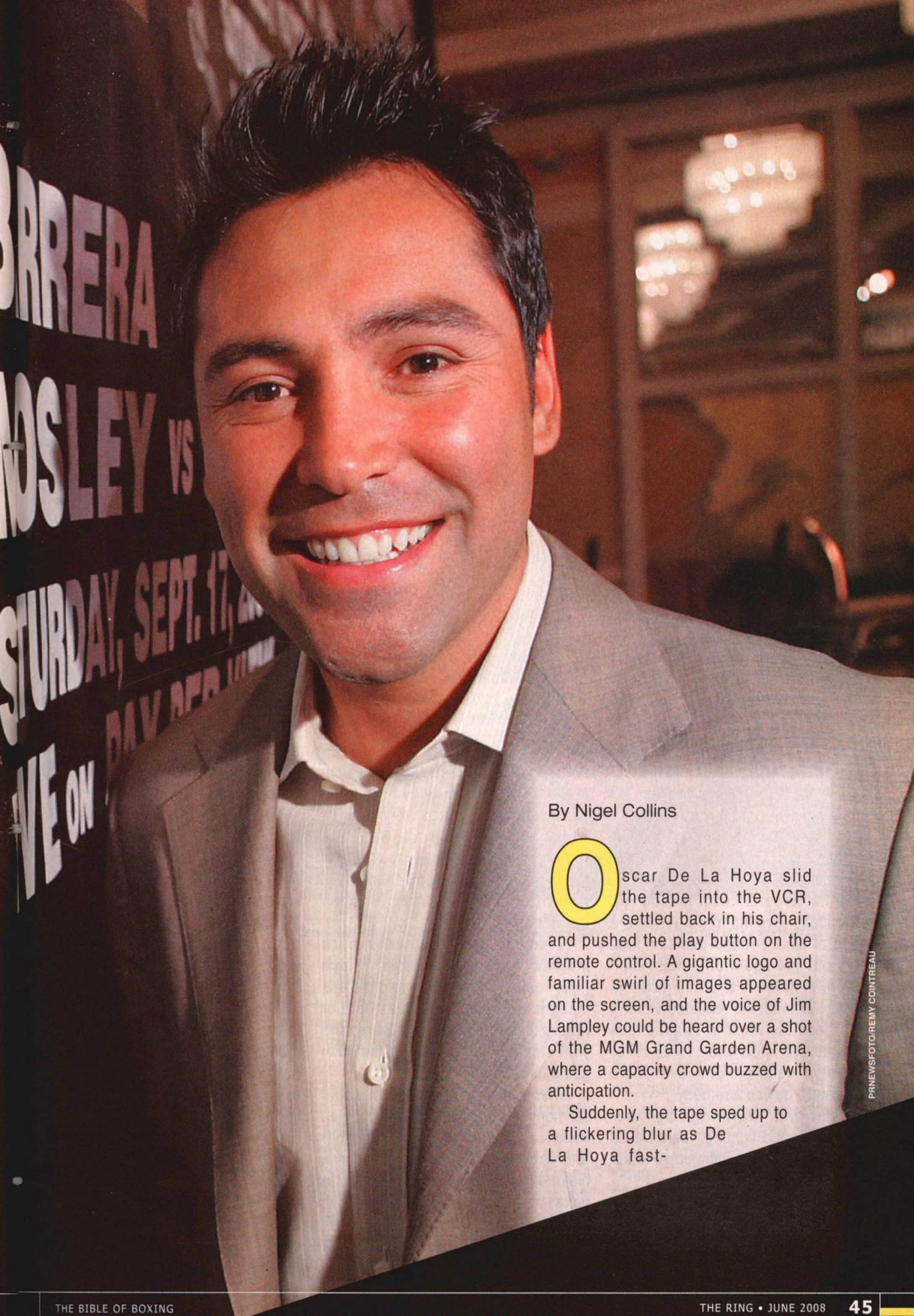
The climate and the time difference will be a couple of things I need to adapt to because I'll be fighting in America for the first time. But I've spoken to Ricky about certain parts of his preparation—he's boxed in Vegas three times—and I'll know what to expect. For example, I'll stay at a house away from the Strip, rather than in one of the casino hotels, because the air-conditioning will be better. So I'm not stepping into the unknown and I have no qualms about fighting Hopkins in America. I boxed Robin Reid, Mark Delaney, Richie Woodhall, and Eubanks as very much "the outsider," and I've also fought twice before overseas. Plus I know that, if I didn't go to America to fight Hopkins, he would never have come to me, not in a month of Sundays.

I'm hoping that he comes to fight and doesn't run and hold when the bell rings on April 19, but whatever he does, I will win with my brain, my heart, and my skills. ■

Joe Calzaghe, 44-0 (32), is THE RING super middleweight champion of the world.

EXIT STRATEGY

IS OSCAR READY FOR HIS BIGGEST CHALLENGE?



By Nigel Collins

Oscar De La Hoya slid the tape into the VCR, settled back in his chair, and pushed the play button on the remote control. A gigantic logo and familiar swirl of images appeared on the screen, and the voice of Jim Lampley could be heard over a shot of the MGM Grand Garden Arena, where a capacity crowd buzzed with anticipation.

Suddenly, the tape sped up to a flickering blur as De La Hoya fast-

PRNEWSFOTO/REMY COINTREAU

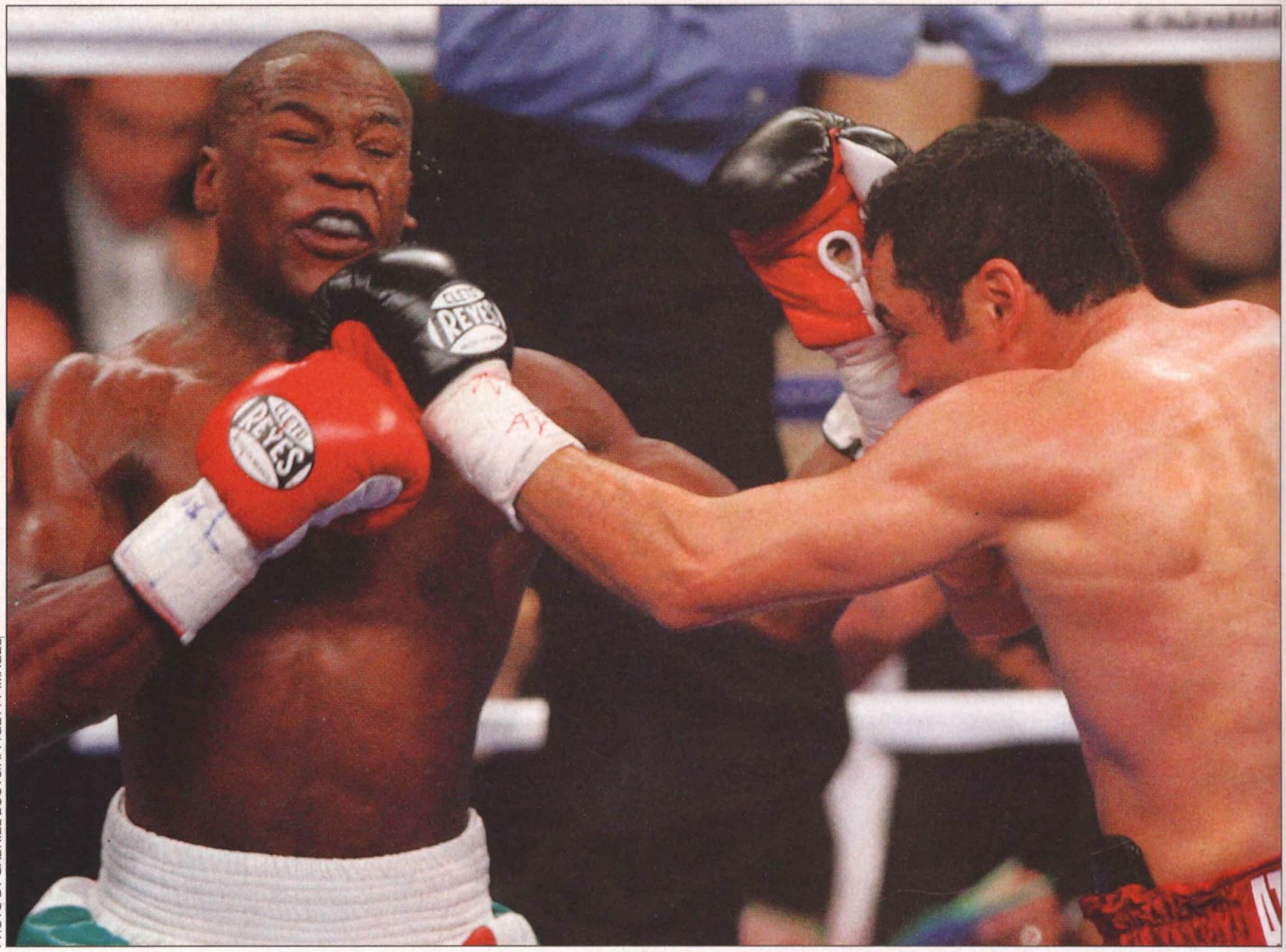


PHOTO BY GABRIEL BOUYS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

De La Hoya enjoyed significant success the first half of his May 2007 fight with Mayweather, but slowed down as the bout progressed and lost a 12-round split decision. Oscar believes he knows the cause of his second-half fade and has taken steps to solve the problem.

forwarded to the spot he was seeking—the opening bell of his May 5, 2007, fight with Floyd Mayweather. He knows exactly where it is by now.

"I've watched the fight about 15 or 20 times," said De La Hoya, his voice businesslike and void of emotion.

De La Hoya is not a masochist, neurotically reveling in defeat as the image of his 12-round decision loss plays out yet again on a television screen. Neither is it an exercise in self-pity. Instead, the repeated viewing of perhaps the most frustrating loss of his career is an effort to discover the root of his failure and, even more importantly, devise a remedy.

"I saw that he won the fight because I stopped fighting," said De La Hoya, immediately getting down to the underlying truth of the matter.

What De La Hoya saw as he revisited the fifth loss of his 38-5 (30) career is the same thing that the live crowd of 16,700 and millions of pay-per-view customers saw: De La Hoya, slightly ahead or at the very least even at the halfway point, fading badly the second half of the fight. The left jab he had used to disrupt Mayweather's rhythm and pressure him into the ropes disappeared almost entirely, while Oscar's work rate dropped incrementally.

"I have to admit that with me it's mental," said De La Hoya. "Floyd [Mayweather] Senior has told me this many times before. I train as hard or harder than any fighter out there, and yet I stop fighting because I think I'm going to get tired."

After mulling things over for about six months, De La Hoya devised a plan to both avenge his loss to Mayweather and wrap up his boxing career in a blaze of glory. And why not? If ever a boxer was capable of writing his own exits, it's "The Golden Boy."

But instead of focusing exclusively on Mayweather, Oscar has inserted the rematch into the middle slot of an ambitious three-fight farewell tour unlike anything previously attempted.

True, there have been farewell tours before, but most of them share a lot in common with the sad series that recently ended the career of Mexican icon Julio Cesar Chavez. Like so many depleted heroes before him, "The Lion Of Culiacan" was motivated by economic necessity and reduced to swapping punches with fifth-raters in a forlorn attempt to finance his retirement. De La Hoya is a multimillionaire, plotting a going away party on a grandiose scale, a bold exercise calculated to enhance his legacy as much, if not more so, than his ever-burgeoning bank account.

"I thought about it right after the Mayweather-Hatton fight," said De La Hoya. "I knew I was going to fight again in 2008, so I might as well do it the right way, in a big way. We set the fight with Floyd for September,

and obviously, my best years in boxing have been when I've been active, stayed in shape, and was in the gym almost every day. So, I said to myself, *I have to fight in May. I'll fight again in September and I'll do my farewell fight in December.*"

De La Hoya hasn't fought three times in one year since 1999, when he beat Ike Quartey and Oba Carr, and lost a controversial decision to Felix Trinidad. It's a demanding schedule, especially for a 35-year-old who has fought just twice the past three years, but one that De La Hoya is convinced will allow him to regain the form that once carried him to the top of the pound-for-pound ratings.

Oscar's Golden Farewell Tour begins May 3, against Steve Forbes. Most likely, it will be held at the Home Depot Center in Carson, California, a sports complex that includes a 27,000-seat soccer stadium, which can accommodate approximately 40,000 for boxing. But there has also been talk of staging it in Mexico City's massive Azteca Stadium, a venue that can hold 140,000. Regardless of the site, the fight will be broadcast by HBO, but will not be pay-for-view. Moreover, it is scheduled for one of the network's "preview weekends," when non-subscribers can access the subscription channel free of charge, beyond basic cable fees.

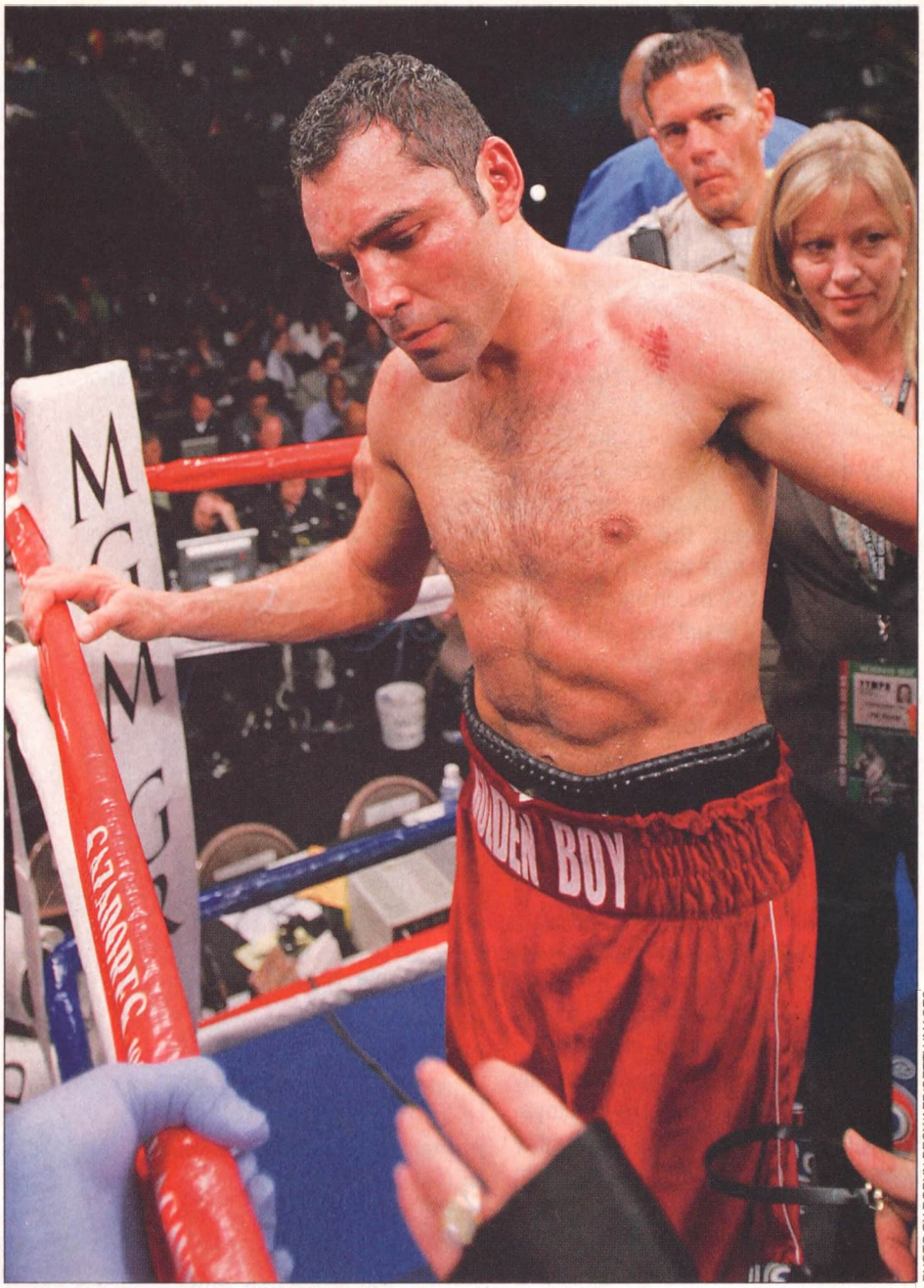


PHOTO BY ROBYN BECK/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

A despondent-looking De La Hoya leaves the ring following his loss to Mayweather. "The Golden Boy" is convinced the rematch will result in an entirely different outcome and that he'll exit with a smile on his face.

"The majority of the tickets will be priced at $10, $15, or $20," said De La Hoya. "It is kind of a thank-you fight for all my fans. Yes, I will be in a serious fight, but a fight that's not on pay-per-view, a fight that people can go to and not have to pay a thousand dollars for a ringside seat."

It's also a very smart move: De La Hoya will have the rare opportunity to ease back into action against a non-threatening opponent, while pacifying fans who have grown weary of shelling out hefty PPV fees. What is more, it will serve as an infomercial for the September rematch with Mayweather, and will most likely be seen by more people than any fight De La Hoya has ever had.

No plan is perfect, and as is to be expected, critics have criticized De La Hoya for taking a tuneup fight. Oscar, also as to be expected, doesn't see it that way.

"Stevie Forbes has a similar style to Floyd Junior," he noted. "He's very quick, and he's coming off a win against [Francisco] Bojado. To me, this is no tuneup fight. Obviously, a lot of people will call it that, but I feel it's a tough fight. Forbes has never been dropped or knocked out. It's gonna be a fight. It will keep me in the gym and keep me sharp. But there are obviously no guarantees in this game. We all know what can happen when people have tuneup fights. These so-called tests become challenging fights. It's a lifetime opportunity for your opponent."

Still, there is no denying that light-punching Forbes, 33-5 (9), is the smallest foe De La Hoya has faced in years. Forbes won the IBF 130-pound title in 2000, but lost it at the scales in his second defense, even though he went on to outpoint challenger David Santos after scaling almost five pounds

over the division limit. Forbes fought on, but lost a couple of subsequent title challenges and had been pretty much forgotten until he became a cast member in the second season of *The Contender*.

Although he lost a close decision to the naturally larger Grady Brewer in the finals, the likeable Forbes emerged from the reality TV show with a higher profile than when he held an alphabet belt. His first post-*Contender* bout resulted in a decision loss to Demetrius Hopkins in a fight that virtually everybody except the three official judges thought Forbes had won. But in his most recent fight, the 30-year-old Forbes decisioned the significantly younger (24) and much harder-punching Bojado, a result that put him in position to be at least a semi-palatable adversary for De La Hoya.

De La Hoya has too much at stake to take Forbes for granted, and by the time De La Hoya spoke with THE RING in late-January, he had already been working out for about seven weeks. A lot of what he'd been doing was of a therapeutic nature, gradually healing old wounds that have inhibited recent performances.

"We are targeting the areas where I had nagging pain to make them stronger, and I have to say it's actually been working," reported De La Hoya. "My left shoulder feels great. My lower back, which has given me slight problems but nothing that has kept me away from the gym, is better. I feel really good. My left hand is feeling strong. I don't have that pinching pain in my shoulder anymore."

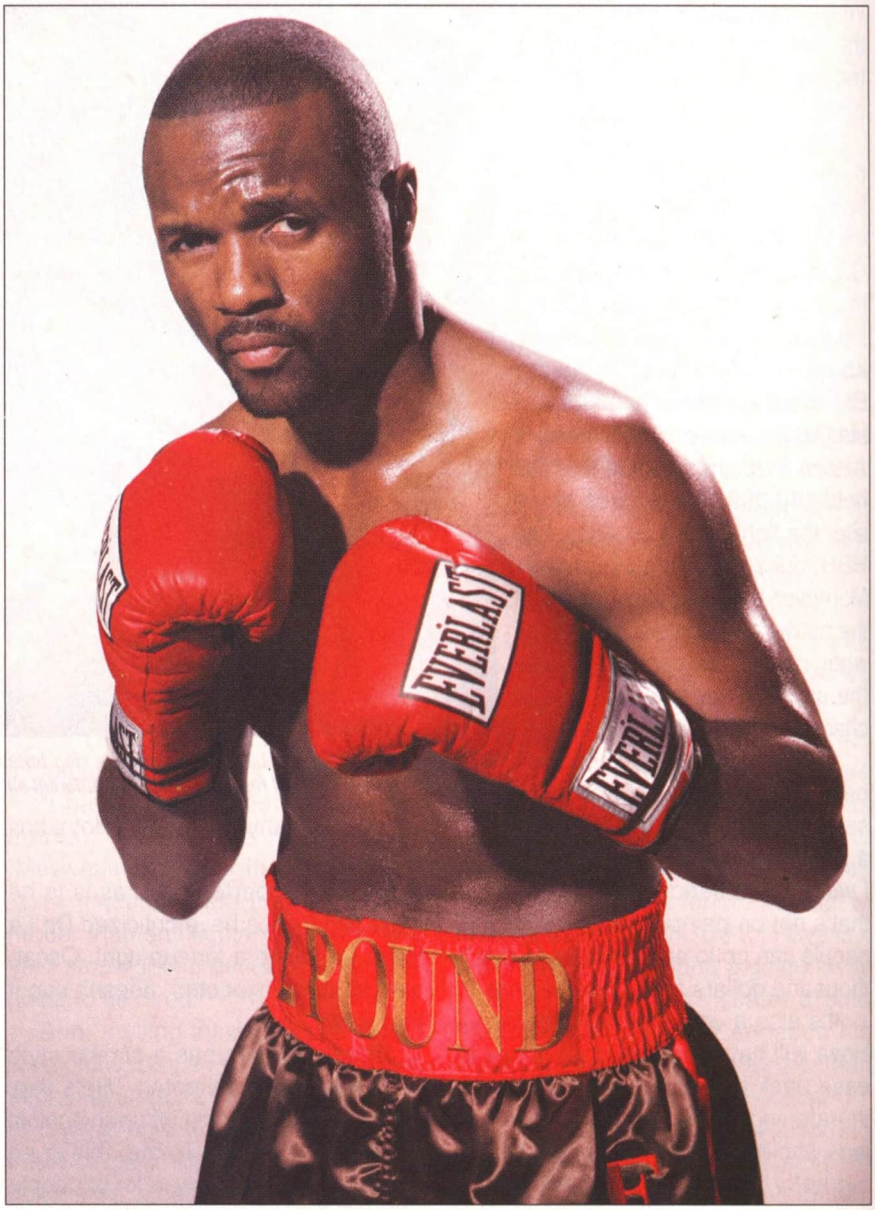
While physical therapy, when properly applied, can work wonders on the body, the mindset that De La Hoya blames for his tendency to fade in the late rounds requires a different kind of rehabilitation. And that is one of the main reasons he will be bringing back Floyd Mayweather Sr. as his trainer.

"It stared as I got older, but I can recall a few fights when I was young when I would do this: not stop fighting, but kind of slow down the pace. It's just something mental that I have to conquer," said De La Hoya. "For instance, in the Ricardo Mayorga fight, I could have fought 20 rounds. Mayweather Senior planted in my head that I'm in great shape and that I can just keep going, fighting as hard as I can. I need people to convince me, to make me aware that I'm the hardest worker out there. It doesn't have to do with conditioning. It's just that I have to convince myself that I can fight hard for 12 rounds."

Adjusting his psychological outlook is not, however, the only reason Floyd Senior will be returning to De La Hoya's corner. The self-proclaimed "world's greatest trainer" was willing to help Oscar beat his son the first time, but the $2-million fee he demanded proved too steep. What is more, there was the undeniably seamy aspect of a father training a fighter to beat his own son, a son who he had raised from the cradle to be a prizefighter.

But now, thanks to HBO's *24/7*, the whole world is aware of the broken relationship between "Pretty Boy" and his father, making the reunion of Big Floyd and De La Hoya part of a natural progression in the soap opera-like saga of the dysfunctional Mayweather clan. It is also an element that could help sell the rematch.

"It's definitely going to help market the fight," agreed De La Hoya, "but the big reason I'm going to have



Former IBF junior lightweight titleholder Forbes will be De La Hoya's May opponent. Although he is a modest puncher and a naturally smaller man, Forbes is quick and skillful, just the kind of opponent to help Oscar sharpen his skills for the rematch with Mayweather.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

He's back! Floyd Mayweather Sr. will return as De La Hoya's trainer, which will certainly add a lot of spice to the buildup to De La Hoya-Mayweather II. Adding to the wacky scenario is the fact that Big Floyd's brother, Roger Mayweather, will train "Pretty Boy."

Floyd Senior with me is to beat the world's best. I believe he has those little details that are necessary to beat Floyd Junior, his son."

How Floyd Junior will react to the sight of his estranged father in his rival's corner remains to be seen. It could just as well inspire him to greater heights as it could rattle his confidence. But we can certainly count on the buildup being even more outrageous than the first time. Instead of Pretty Boy spewing venom at De La Hoya at press conferences, he will probably be going nose-to-nose with his father, who is no slouch in the trash talk department. And when you factor in Uncle Roger, Big Floyd's bro and trainer of Little Floyd, they are going to need more than one of those Plexiglas barriers that kept Fernando Vargas and Ricardo Mayorga away from one another's throats.

Regardless of the outcome of Mayweather-De La Hoya II, and, of course, barring a serious injury, De La Hoya plans to have a farewell fight in December. It could be seen as something of an insurance policy, because if Oscar beats Forbes in May, as expected, but loses again to Mayweather, he'll still have the opportunity to go out with a win.

On the other hand, if De La Hoya prevails in the rematch—and don't forget that on the scorecards, at least, Oscar came closer to beating Little Floyd than anybody else—anything is possible. Perhaps even a showdown with Miguel Cotto. After all, if he beats Mayweather at 147 pounds, Oscar will be the undisputed welterweight champion of the world, and what better way to bow out than to beat the man some believe Mayweather is ducking.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves; De La Hoya learned that lesson the hard way when he overlooked Felix Sturm and almost blew his highly lucrative showdown with Bernard Hopkins.

"I'm focused on my May fight," insisted De La Hoya, "but I know I can get revenge in September, and that's kind of like the big prize, the light at the end of the tunnel. I haven't really given my December fight much thought."

De La Hoya has, however, given considerable thought to life after boxing.

"I've always had a plan, whether it was going out losing or going out winning, and that plan was this is going to be my last year," De La Hoya reiterated. "I believe that, if planned right, if you have something to fall back on, whether it was a job in a different field or whether it's promoting the way I am, a fighter can retire when he wants to retire and not come back. And that's what is happening with me. I know I'm not going to miss the sport or being up in that ring."

Maybe not, but boxing is sure going to miss him. Although others have contributed to the cause, over the last dozen or so years, no fighter has had the drawing power of The Golden Boy or transcended the sport to such

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Even though boxing is going to miss De La Hoya when he finally hangs up his gloves, Oscar is confident that the sport will continue to attract big crowds and healthy PPV numbers, providing the right fights are made.

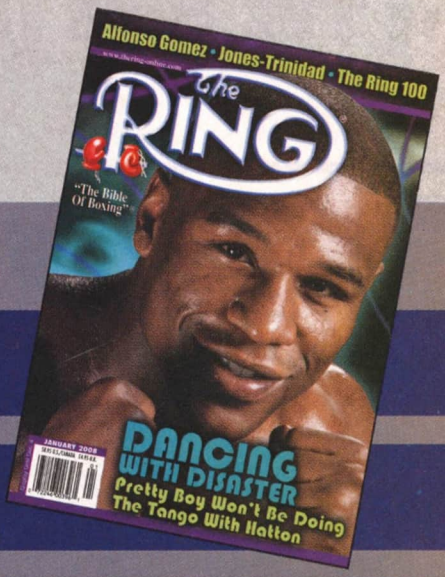
a large degree. Sure, somebody will eventually come along to fill the void; they always do. But in the meantime, one can't help but wonder how Oscar's Golden Boy Promotions will be affected when he's no longer providing the company with a huge infusion of cash whenever he pulls on the gloves.

"I feel that when I'm done fighting, boxing will take a little hit," he concedes. "But as long as we have all of these great fights happening, boxing is once again going to survive like it has for so many years. Right now, I feel like I'm working with my hands tied behind my back, when it comes to my promotional company.

"There are so many plans and ideas that I have for my company, so many things [Golden Boy CEO] Richard [Schaefer] and I want to do. In the long run, I believe boxing will benefit because of the long hours I will be able to dedicate to really helping the sport. Ultimately, my goal is to make sure boxing is alive and well, and it comes down to making the fights that people want to watch."

The guess here is that regardless of what comes afterward, a lot of people will want to watch De La Hoya navigate the obstacle course he's erected between himself and the final bell. But will it really be the final bell? As unlikely as it might seem at this juncture, if Oscar goes 3-0 in '08, no one knows for sure what will happen in '09. ■

The RING



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Larry Holmes

"I'm Proud That I Have My Faculties"

We've known for a very long time that Larry Holmes would be voted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame the moment he became eligible—we just didn't think it would take so long. Holmes finally retired in 2002 at the age of 53 after scoring a 10-round decision over Eric "Butterbean" Esch in Norfolk, Virginia, and thus met the Hall's five-year inactivity requirement in 2007. His final record is 69-6 (44). He held the WBC heavyweight title from 1978-'83 and the IBF title from 1984-'85 and made 20 defenses, second only to Joe Louis. He will be inducted in June.

In January, THE RING Senior Writer William Dettloff met with Holmes in Allentown, Pennsylvania, a short ride from Holmes' beloved hometown of Easton. Holmes was in Allentown taping a segment of his cable television show, ***What The Heck Were They Thinking?****—a talk show that promises to take viewers "inside the minds of celebrities, star athletes, and politicians." On this day Holmes and co-host Mike Mittman discussed, among other things, the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, driving while texting, Wesley Snipes' tax problems, gun control legislation, the FDA's approval of the sale of meat harvested from cloned animals, and the Roy Jones-Felix Trinidad fight.*

Holmes still had a lot to say after the taping, and he and Dettloff talked for a full 90 minutes during a revealing, entertaining, frequently profane, and refreshingly unrestrained interview. Dettloff reports:

"Early on, it became clear that, even after all these years, Holmes still clings to the bitterness and low-grade paranoia that made him a bit hard to warm up to during his heyday. There's also a bit of the arrogance that is part of every great athlete. That chip on his shoulder is still there. But I got the very strong sense that not only is some measure of it a defense mechanism, but also an act: As soon as I turned off the tape recorder, he was humble, soft-spoken, reserved, gracious. What an interesting and, yes, entirely likable man."

The Ring: You've expressed a lot of animosity over the years toward George Foreman. Was that ...

Larry Holmes *(interrupting)*: I never expressed any animosity toward George Foreman. George Foreman expressed a lot animosity toward me, and the reason is he's afraid of me. But I never had any animosity toward George Foreman. He's been one of my favorite fighters of all-time. I used to talk to him all the time. But when they came around saying, "Would you fight George?" I said, "Hell yeah, I'll fight him." "Can you whip George?" "Hell yeah, I can whup George." What am I gonna say, no, I can't whup him? I got the style to beat George Foreman. So George resented me for saying that. But I don't have anything against George.

The Ring: How close were you two to fighting in 1998 before the bout was canceled?

LH: We were very close. The guy gave me a half a million dollars up front and gave George a million. George was probably the happiest guy in the world that it didn't come off. When we did our tour and went here and there, I let George tell me what the hell to do because I wanted to get him in the ring. George said, "Okay Larry, when we get over there, say this and say that. Oh Larry, when we talk to these guys, act like this." Okay, fine. I don't need him to teach me. I ain't no damn fool. But I did it. I let him do it because I wanted the fight and wanted to let him feel superior. He ain't s___ to me. But I always respected him because of what he did in boxing.

The Ring: Tell me what you miss the most about ...

LH *(interrupting)*: The money! M-O-N-E-Y. I miss the money. I miss the big checks that came in every time I fought.

The Ring: You read my mind. I was going to ask what you miss the most about being the heavyweight champion.

LH: The money! I don't have to read your mind. I know what you're going to say. I've been through this before. But people say, "Don't say that." Don King used to say to me, "Don't tell nobody you're fighting for money, you got to say you love the sport, it's a great sport, man." And it is a great sport, but I don't want to get punched in the face for free. Boxing is a great sport, but do you want me to recommend it to your son? Hell no!

The Ring: Did your son ever

PHOTO BY STU SAKS

express an interest in boxing?

LH: Yeah. And you know what I said? "Take your ass to school. I made enough money for you to live and do whatever you want to do. But if you want to do it, I guess I have to help you." He came to the gym a couple times, hit the bags, boxed around a little bit, and I told him I'd rather see him play football, which is dangerous too. I didn't want him to do that either.

The Ring: So you're pleased that he didn't box.

LH: I liked for him to learn how to box to protect himself and be the man that he wanted to be. I think everybody should have something like that, and boxing is not harmful unless you go into the ring and take punches and get beat up all the time. But I would not let my son do that. But if he wanted to learn how to fight to protect himself, I'm 110 percent for it.

The Ring: Having said that about your son boxing, do you think boxing is good or bad for a society?

LH: It's good for society. It's another outlet. You see Roy Jones with them chicken fights, just like that damn boy with the dogs, whatever his name is.

The Ring: Michael Vick.

LH: They find an outlet; they need something to do. So boxing is good for people, it's legal, it keeps them out of jail, then go out there and do it. But when you got chickens fighting and dogs fighting, that's crazy. I'm not going to let my dogs fight and let other dogs beat my dog up and kill my dog. But yet people respect those guys. But if I did that, what are people going to say? They made an example of this guy Vick now, but he's been doing that s___ for years. People knew about it, but they didn't say anything about it. But if I did it, they'd kick my butt. I have to keep this nose clean and watch myself every time I turn around.

The Ring: You still feel that way? Even now, after all this time?

LH: Hell yeah! But I don't care. Like when I said Rocky Marciano couldn't carry my jockstrap. That was in 1985 and it still haunts me. But people took it out of context. I said it because it's slang that we used back in the day when we'd say, "You couldn't carry my basketball," or "You couldn't carry my boxing gloves." It was just slang.

The Ring: But your point was that he wasn't in your league as a fighter, is that right?

LH: The point is *none* of them was in my league when I was fighting, okay? Muhammad Ali, Joe Frazier, Joe Louis, Sonny Liston, none of 'em. I feel that way about me. And if I don't feel that way about me I'm f_ _ _ up. That's the way I feel.

The Ring: Someone wrote once that you were great not because of your jab or your foot speed, but because you refused to lose. Is that accurate, and if it is, where did that come from?

LH: I didn't want to lose because if I lost then everybody was right. From 1973 to 1985 I didn't lose. And they said my legs were too small, I couldn't punch, I was trying to copy off Muhammad Ali, I wasn't going anywhere. If I had lost, they would have been right. And that kept me motivated. When everybody was out there drinking, having fun after a fight, I was home sleeping, and the next morning I was at the gym trying to get that jab together. I broke my right hand against Roy Williams, and the next day I was in the hospital getting my hand fixed, and the next day after that I

PHOTO BY STU SAKS

Holmes and host Mike Mittman on the set of* What The Heck Were They Thinking?*—a weekly television program broadcast from Allentown, Pennsylvania, which is near the ex-champ's hometown of Easton. On the show, Holmes gives his opinion of a variety of current topics.

was down in the gym banging away with my left jab.

The Ring: So if not for the critics, you wouldn't have made it.

LH: I wouldn't have made it.

The Ring: If boxing wasn't available to you as a young man, what do you think you would have become?

LH: I probably would have had to stay in school and become a carpenter or an architect or a genius *(laughs)*. I could have been anything I wanted to because I was intelligent enough to do that. But one of the things that drove me more was I dropped out of school. If I had stayed in school, I probably wouldn't have been the heavyweight champion of the world. I would have had an education.

The Ring: What's the single biggest myth people believe about big-time boxing that just isn't true? What do the fans not know? Is it that all fighters fight only for money?

LH: No, fighters don't fight only for money. They fight for glory and for respect. And the money happens to be there. If that were true, they wouldn't have any amateur fights, they wouldn't have any Golden Gloves or Olympics. They don't get a damn thing.

The Ring: So it's not all about the money?

LH: When people go into boxing they go in because they love it, and the icing on the cake is they get paid, they get money. There was a time when I really didn't care that much about the boxing. I got really involved with it later on when I got away from Muhammad Ali. Ali would give me $500 or $1,000 a week (to spar) and that was cash money. I'd put it in my pocket. I was set. I didn't have to worry about anything. I had $10, $15,000 saved up, I was happy. But then I said I got to go on my own because I want to become more than just a sparring partner. Some guys are content with that.

The Ring: So the way fans see the sport is accurate or are there things most people just don't see?

PHOTO BY STU SAKS

"I never expressed any animosity toward George Foreman. George Foreman expressed a lot animosity toward me, and the reason is he's afraid of me."

LH: Well, fans are fickle. They like to see boxing, they like the violence, they want to see who can beat who up. But they can't see it anymore unless they want to pay $50. And that's what's wrong with boxing today. They don't see them anymore when they're amateurs, they don't put them on NBC, or ABC, or the USA Network. They put them on pay-per-view. Someone told me how much ringside tickets were for the Jones fight. It was ridiculous. People pay it so they can say they sat there with Don King, but it ain't worth it. Don King's s___ stinks just like yours and mine and everybody else's. Same thing with every big celebrity out there, but what we do as humans is make a big thing out of them and they're just performers. I was just a performer. I was performing how to kick ass out there because when I did, I made money.

The Ring: I got the sense reading your book that you and King had a love-hate relationship when you were fighting. What are your thoughts on him now?

LH: I just talked to him two weeks ago. He said, "I want you come to my fight!" I said, "Sure Don, I'd be glad to come; can I get some money?" He said, "Larry, you got money." I said, "Don, that ain't the problem. The problem is I'm making an appearance at your fight, I worked for you when I was fighting, you made a lot of money with me, you took a lot of money, give

me a couple bucks back." "Ah, man, come on, champ, just do me a favor, man." I said, "Well, Don, I'll call you back." And I didn't. Because I don't need to go to the fight. If I go to the fight, give me $10,000, because I'm going to have to drive to New York, put up with the traffic, sign autographs, take pictures, be real nice to people, and everything. You have to do that.

The Ring: So on the whole, was King good for your career or bad?

LH: Good! Don King was good for my career because he taught me two lessons. One was to keep my hands up and protect myself at all times, and the second was watch your damn money, because he would get it from you. He'd tell you, "I'm going to give you a million dollars." Come back the next day and he'd say, "Look, I can't give you but $800,000." You'd come back next week and he'd say, "Look man, I can't give you the 800, I can only give you 450." I know Don better than Don knows Don. I was with him 20 years. I know Don King.

The Ring: What's the single biggest difference between the way boxing is today and when you were fighting?

LH: Exposure. Nobody can get exposure. You have to be liked before you can get exposure. And one of the things they like is someone who's going to listen to them. Oscar De La Hoya is going to listen to HBO. And HBO's going to make sure he's happy.

The Ring: It sounds like you follow the game pretty closely still.

LH: I watch it. I watch people. I study people. I know people. I might not have a lot of education and stuff like that, but I'm educated when it comes to people. I know Don King. I know Bob Arum. I know Ross Greenburg. I knew Ross Greenburg when he was just a kid. I knew Ross Greenburg when I said to him, "Ross, why don't you give me a shot at being a commentator on your show?" You know, people get to the top and they forget. Well, I haven't forgot. And I won't let them forget.

The Ring: Forget what?

LH: They can say I'm broke or I'm not rich or whatever, but what I got, I got through working hard for it—not for what they gave me. Because what they gave me Don took back a long time ago.

The Ring: Larry, what's happened to the black American heavyweight? If you look at The Ring ratings, there isn't ...

LH: They're spoiled! They work hard to get to the top and when they get there they slack off because they get that money in their pocket and they forget they have to work hard to keep that money. You don't get guys today who do what I did. I fought four or five times a year. And I took less to get a fight I needed to get. I'd get a little and I'd put it here, get another little bit, put it here, and next thing you know I got a whole damn stack of it. That's why I have a few dollars today.

The Ring: When you accepted the IBF heavyweight title in 1985 you gave the IBF instant credibility. Here we are, 22 years later, and there are four sanctioning bodies and, four heavyweight "champions." Do you feel you have any role in having created that since you accepted the IBF's title?

LH: I had a role, but it was a positive role. And I continued to do one thing, which you are forgetting: helped make the WBC. Because when Muhammad refused to fight by the rules of the WBC, they took his title. ***(Editor's note: the WBC stripped Leon Spinks for agreeing to give Ali an immediate rematch).*** They were nothing then. Then they had the box-off and I emerged from that. I fought for years under that title, making them what they are.

The Ring: And then?

LH: I didn't want them dictating to me. I don't mind following rules as long as the rules are right. They said I had to fight Greg Page for $1.5-million. I had an offer to fight Marvis Frazier for $3-million. I told them I'd fight Marvis first and then Page. They said I can't do that. I said. "Oh yes I can." So I told Don and

Holmes with Don King in 1980, shortly before Larry's bout with Muhammad Ali. Even though "The Easton Assassin" fought most of his major bouts for King, the fighter and promoter had a stormy relationship.

PHOTO BY STU SAKS

"Like when I said Rocky Marciano couldn't carry my jockstrap. That was in 1985 and it still haunts me. But people took it out of context. I said it because it's slang that we used back in the day."

Jose Sulaiman that I was going to change organizations because I can fight Frazier for $3-million and they (the IBF) are going to make me champ.

The Ring: But that wasn't a great experience either, was it?

LH: As soon as I dropped the WBC title, they (the IBF) started plotting against me. They said, "Larry, you don't run our organization." I told them I wasn't trying to run their organization. But Bob Lee had ties with Butch Lewis, and that's why they stuck it up my ass when I fought Michael Spinks.

The Ring: Besides Page, there were other guys that were highly ranked and highly thought of at the time that you never fought, guys like Michael Dokes and Gerrie Coetzee.

LH: Well, Dokes was on the other side. He was the WBA champion and only had the title for a little while when Coetzee knocked him out. We never even had negotiations. And Coetzee, we almost made that fight.

The Ring: What happened?

LH: He was South African and it was apartheid, but I agreed to fight Coetzee down the road because a guy from Texas said he'd give me $13-million and two f___ing Rolls Royces! I was going to fight him. Don

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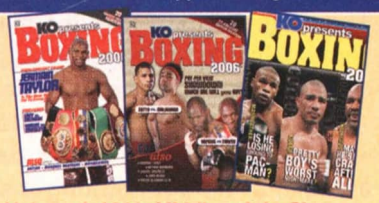

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King said, "Oh no you ain't," and I said, "Oh yes I am, for the WBC title." Don said he wanted $1-million from the guy—the guy walked up and gave him a million dollars—*bam*! Put it in his hand. Don said, "Okay, you got six weeks to come up with all of Coetzee's money." The guy was like two days late. King revoked the agreement—over two days.

The Ring: Bernard Hopkins made some noise recently when he told Joe Calzaghe, the champion from Wales, that he'd never lose to a white man. Hasn't that always been a common thought among black fighters until very recently?

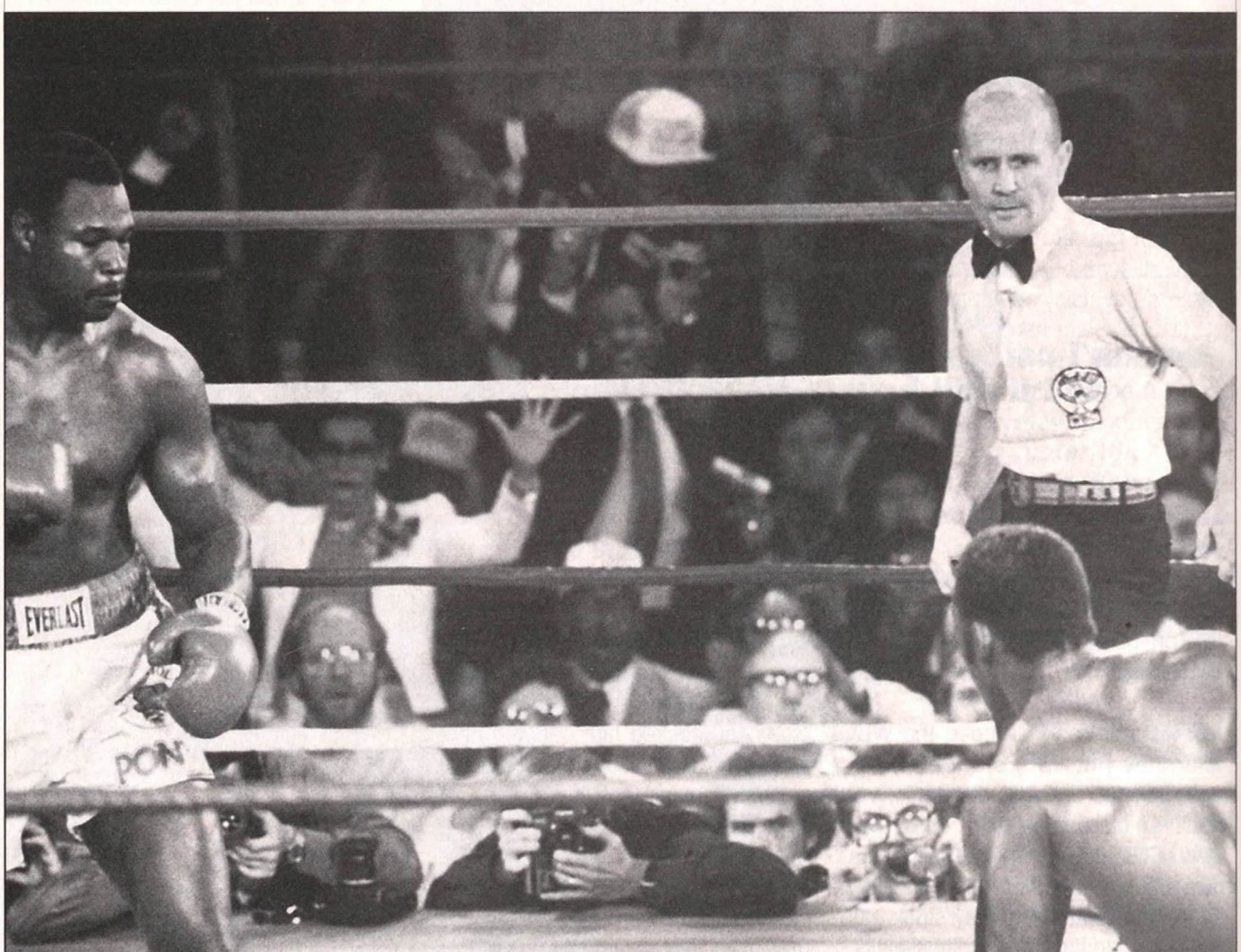
LH: No. Because I don't give a damn whether you're black or white—if you can fight, you can fight. When you get in the ring you want to kick my ass. What happens is, in the black circle, and probably in the white circle, because this is what happened when I fought Gerry Cooney, if a white guy beats a black guy up, the neighborhood kicks his ass, and it's the same thing in the white neighborhood. They were kicking my ass: "That white boy gonna whup your goddamn ass." That's the kind of thing I was going through in the black neighborhoods, and I'm sure Gerry Cooney was going through the same thing: "You better kick that n_____ ass out there," and when he didn't, they killed Gerry. And he went to drinking because he couldn't get over the fact that I kicked his ass. But I told Gerry, while we were promoting the fight, "Don't let these f___ers get to you. They're going to talk s___. Don't let them get to you."

The Ring: At the time, your fight with Cooney was the richest fight in history and the promotion was largely built around race. What do you think about using ethnicity to promote a fight?

LH: It's not about race, I don't give a damn if you're black, white, green, orange, yellow, Italian, Jew, whatever, they're going to use it. It's always been that way. But it's up to you to not fall into that s___. It's up to you to remember that you're human and I'm human, and either you're going to kick my ass or I'm going to kick your ass. Know what I said to Gerry when we got into the middle of the ring (before the first bell)? "Let's have a good fight."

The Ring: If you were made the czar of boxing tomorrow, what would you change about boxing?

LH: I would give the fighters their



Holmes and referee Mills Lane watch Marvis Frazier crumble in the first round of a 1983 title bout. The WBC wanted Holmes to fight Greg Page for half the money he received for fighting Frazier, so Larry switched his allegiance to the IBF.

PHOTO BY STU SAKS

"If I had it to do all over again I would do the same damn s___. I'll take $3.5-million to let Mike Tyson knock me out."

rights, just like in any entertainment business. Those guys take your rights, your film rights. Those guys that fought the other night (Jones and Trinidad) on TV, I bet they didn't even have the rights. I bet HBO or Don King took those rights, and when they gave them their check they took all their rights away. If they want to use their clips, they can't, they have to get permission from those mother f___ers. That's something that I did when I fought, I fought to get rights, and I got them; I waited until the day before the fight to tell them *(laughs)*.

The Ring: What was the point of your fight with Butterbean in 2002?

LH: Seventy-five fights. I wanted to beat Muhammad Ali's record, Joe Louis' record. Muhammad Ali was the greatest of all-time and I wanted to beat his record. He fought 61 times. I fought 75 times. He's f___ed up now from trying to prove himself, taking shots in the gym. I used to tell the mother f___er, "Don't take those shots upside your head." I used to hit him on his arms. I used to throw punches that would miss and fall into the ropes like he made me miss. Because I didn't want to kill him. I was a good actor.

The Ring: What are you most proud of?

LH: I'm proud that I have my faculties. I have some money. And I did what they said I couldn't do: become the heavyweight champion of the world for longer than anyone except for "The Brown Bomber," Joe Louis. And the fights I lost, I didn't really lose them.

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Holmes spent almost two years between his rematch with Michael Spinks and his bout with Mike Tyson touring with his band. But when he was offered $3-million to fight Tyson on short notice, he jumped at the opportunity, despite not having time for a tuneup fight.

The Denmark fight (against Brian Nielsen in 1997) I did not lose. The Holyfield fight was a draw. The Michael Spinks fights, one was a draw the other I kicked his ass, and Oliver McCall, that was a draw.

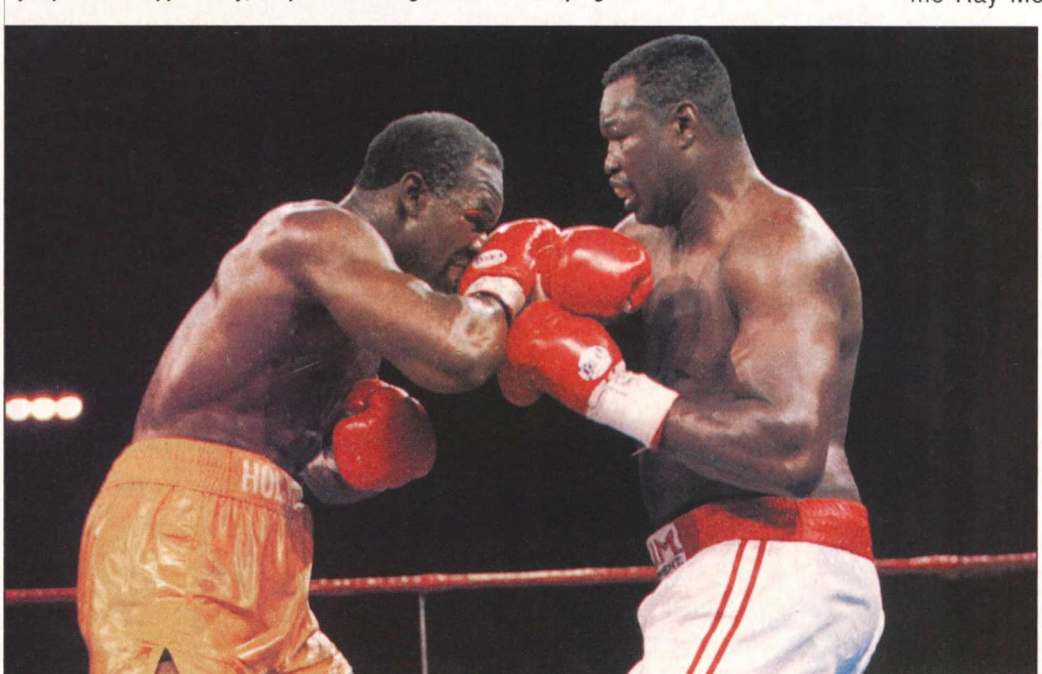
The Ring: And the Tyson fight? You still feel you weren't given enough time to get ready?

LH: I know I wasn't. I was off for two years running around with the band singing and dancing and whatever, and I needed a tuneup. Don King said he was going to give me a tuneup and when it came down to it, Mike Tyson was my tuneup. I had two months to get ready. After two years? I needed some time—to be able to see the punches, to judge the punches. I don't care how good you are, you lose that if you don't get some action.

The Ring: If you had it to do over, would you have demanded more time?

LH: I take it with a grain of salt. If I had it to do all over again I would do the same damn s___. I'll take $3.5-million to let Mike Tyson knock me out. But if they had given me Mike Tyson like they did when they gave me Ray Mercer ... and what happened when I got in there with Mercer? The reporters were saying, "Don't get hurt. This guy's going to kill you." I said, "I'll beat his ass." They said, "I don't know, Larry." I said, "The guy's made for me." I know boxing better than they do.

All these guys are smart, educated mother f___ers out there, but they don't know s___. I'm a seventh-grade dropout and I know more than they do as far as boxing goes. They can read better than me, they can write better than me, they spell better than me, but



Holmes believes that his 1992 shot at then-heavyweight champion Evander Holyfield, which Holyfield won via decision, should have been ruled a draw. The only bout Holmes will admit to losing was his 1988 kayo defeat to Mike Tyson.

they can't think as good as I can think. That's what made me heavyweight champion of the world.

The Ring: What's the biggest regret that you have?

LH: I don't want to regret anything I've done because I know God has a plan, so everything I did was good that I did it. The Mike Tyson fight was good as a way to make a buck. I was all right. I was not hurt. Afterward, I went and got a drink and was happy. I didn't care. When they said, "Larry, what are you going to do after this," I said, "I'm going to get drunk." It was something that I was proud of. Listen man, when you're a seventh-grade dropout and when your first fight is for $60 and then someone pays you $3-million, you got the world by the f___ing balls.

Whoever thought a seventh-grade dropout would have money in the bank? I made a hundred-some million dollars. I've had $30-, $40-million in properties out here in Easton. I had a street named after me: "Larry Holmes f_ _ _ing Drive. Had buildings built, paid cash for them. What fighter do you know who did that? George Foreman, all those mother f_ _ _ers got more money than I got? They don't got s_ _ _. They got a farm out there with some cows. I don't want to be a farmer.

The Ring: You've always known you'd be in the Hall of Fame someday. True?

LH: I never thought about it. I never thought about the Hall of Fame. I got into boxing to make money; I didn't get into it to get into any hall of fame. And I did it by working hard and sacrificing to be heavyweight champion of the world because you have to be the champ to make money. My intention was to make money. It's great that they have all these halls of fame now and athletes get honored, and it's good for my kids that they know I'm in there. I appreciate the Hall of Fame—I helped them get started up there by going and signing autographs. I want to use this as a way to show kids that if Larry Holmes can do it, with a seventh-grade education, they can too. ■

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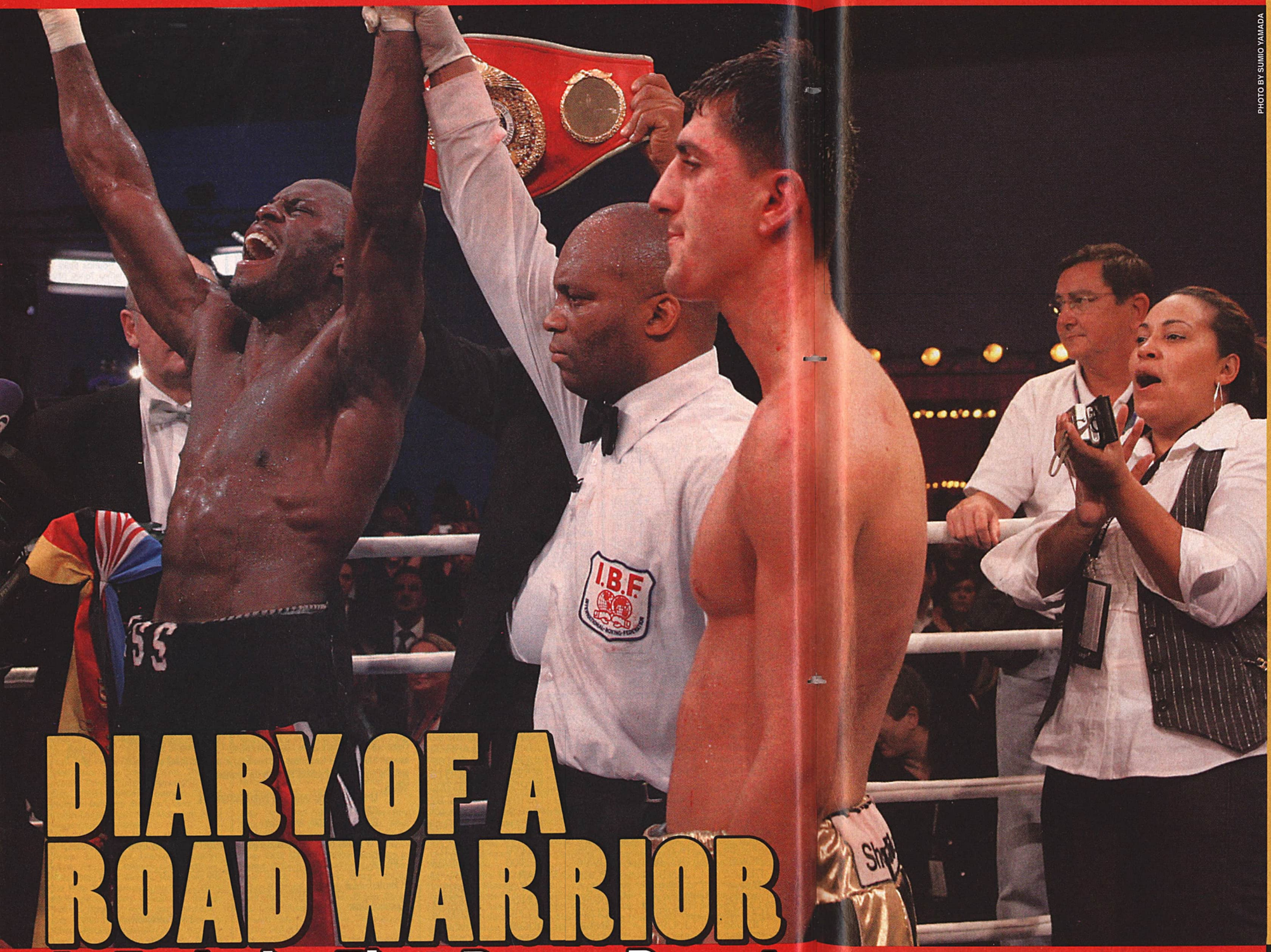

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

DIARY OF A ROAD WARRIOR

An Exclusive First-Person Report

By Steve Cunningham

Steve Cunningham, 21-1 (11), fought 18 of his first 19 pro bouts in the United States, but had to travel to Europe for his three most recent fights to make a name for himself. Fighting local heroes in their own backyard can be a perilous proposition, and Cunningham has experienced both the bitter and the sweet on his European campaign. Here, in his own words, the IBF cruiserweight titleholder, shares some of his adventures with the readers of THE RING.

I'm a guy from West Philadelphia who used to think going a few blocks from my house was far. I went into the U.S. Navy to see the world, but I never really thought boxing would do the same thing. But that's exactly what's happened.

Every major fight I've had has been in Europe, and after my experience in Poland, it's the last place I wanted to go again. But when proposed fights with Jean-Marc Mormeck and Tomasz Adamek fell through, I headed back to Europe anyway. I was disappointed when the Adamek fight fell through because it was the right opponent and the right location—on the Roy Jones-Felix Trinidad undercard at Madison Square Garden. Even so, I wanted to fight, and if that meant going to Germany, so be it.

It's kind of weird, how this all started, because Marco Huck beat Vadim Tokarev the same night I beat Krzysztof Wlodarczyk in Slaskie, Poland, to win the IBF cruiserweight belt.

I'm a realist. I know where I stand in this business. I'm not in much of a position to demand things. I'm not Floyd Mayweather. I'm not Oscar De La Hoya. I go where they point me. I still have to pay my dues to get where Oscar and Floyd are.

Yes, I have a belt, but I need to build a fanbase. Until my first title fight, I'd been buried on undercards. I can point to guys without a belt who have a bigger fanbase, because they've been on TV, and I haven't received that kind of exposure in my home country. Overseas, I have a bigger fanbase, much bigger. Now I'm the beast that ate Europe.

What I believe is that God guides us over a path. So when Adamek fell out, Huck

IBF cruiserweight titlist Steve Cunningham experienced his greatest victory when he went to Germany and beat 3-to-1 hometown favorite Marco Huck to retain the title. Livvy Cunningham, Steve's wife and manager, shares in the moment, clapping energetically as "U.S.S. Cunningham" gets his hand raised in victory.

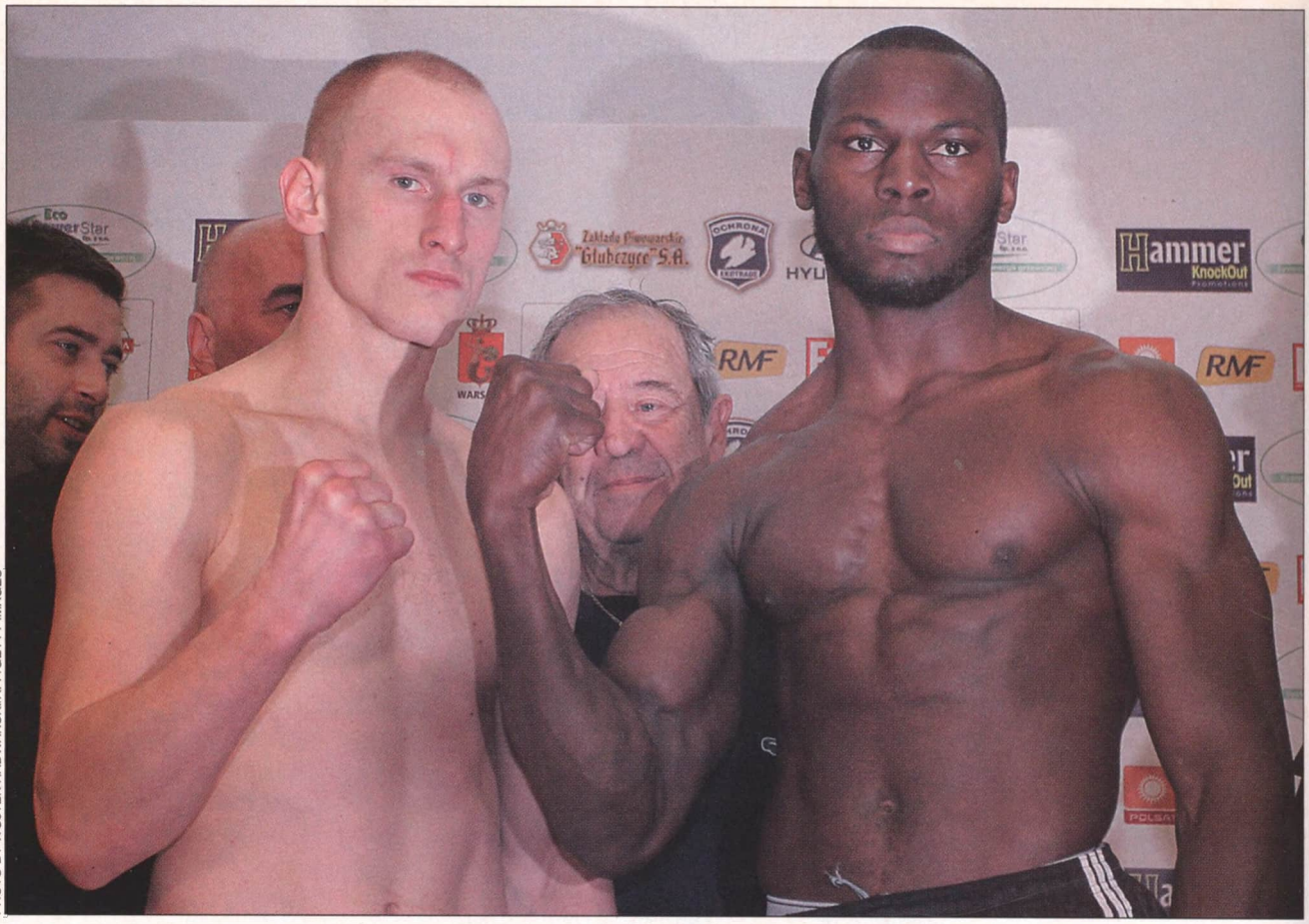

PHOTO BY WOJTEK RADWANSKI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Cunningham and Wlodarczyk pose at the weigh-in for their first fight. Cunningham didn't exactly enjoy his two trips to Poland, where the training conditions were deplorable and people followed him in the streets and pointed as if he were from Mars.

was the choice. We spoke with my promoter, Don King, and he assured us he'd put his best foot forward to win the purse bid and hold the fight in the United States.

Don didn't win the purse bid, but he did drive it up. He came very close to the winning bid of $425,000. Don's bid was $410,000 (Cunningham made a career-best of more than $200,000 for the Huck fight). I have to give Don some credit, because he did come up with a competitive bid. He didn't leave us out there with a bid that was way off.

Don paid all the expenses for the Huck trip, and we made sure we didn't make the same mistakes we did when we went to Poland. That's why we had an extra four days in Germany, and we got there a week-and-a-half before the fight. I spent Christmas there, but my son, Steve, and our daughter, Kennedy, were home, being watched by my mother-in-law. My wife, Livvy, who has been my manager for more than a year now, and I checked on them everyday. We got a $250 phone bill for those 10 days we were away.

There were a lot of crazy things going on at the same time before we left for Germany. I was training, and Livvy's job was to manage the camp and make sure we had everything we needed, manage the pizza shop in West Philly we had just bought, *and* make sure I didn't have any distractions.

PHOTO BY JANEK SKARZYNSKI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Cunningham splits Krzysztof Wlodarczyk's guard with a left during their November 2006 bout in Warsaw for the vacant IBF cruiserweight title. Cunningham came out on the short end of a controversial, 12-round split decision, but took the title in the May 2007 rematch.

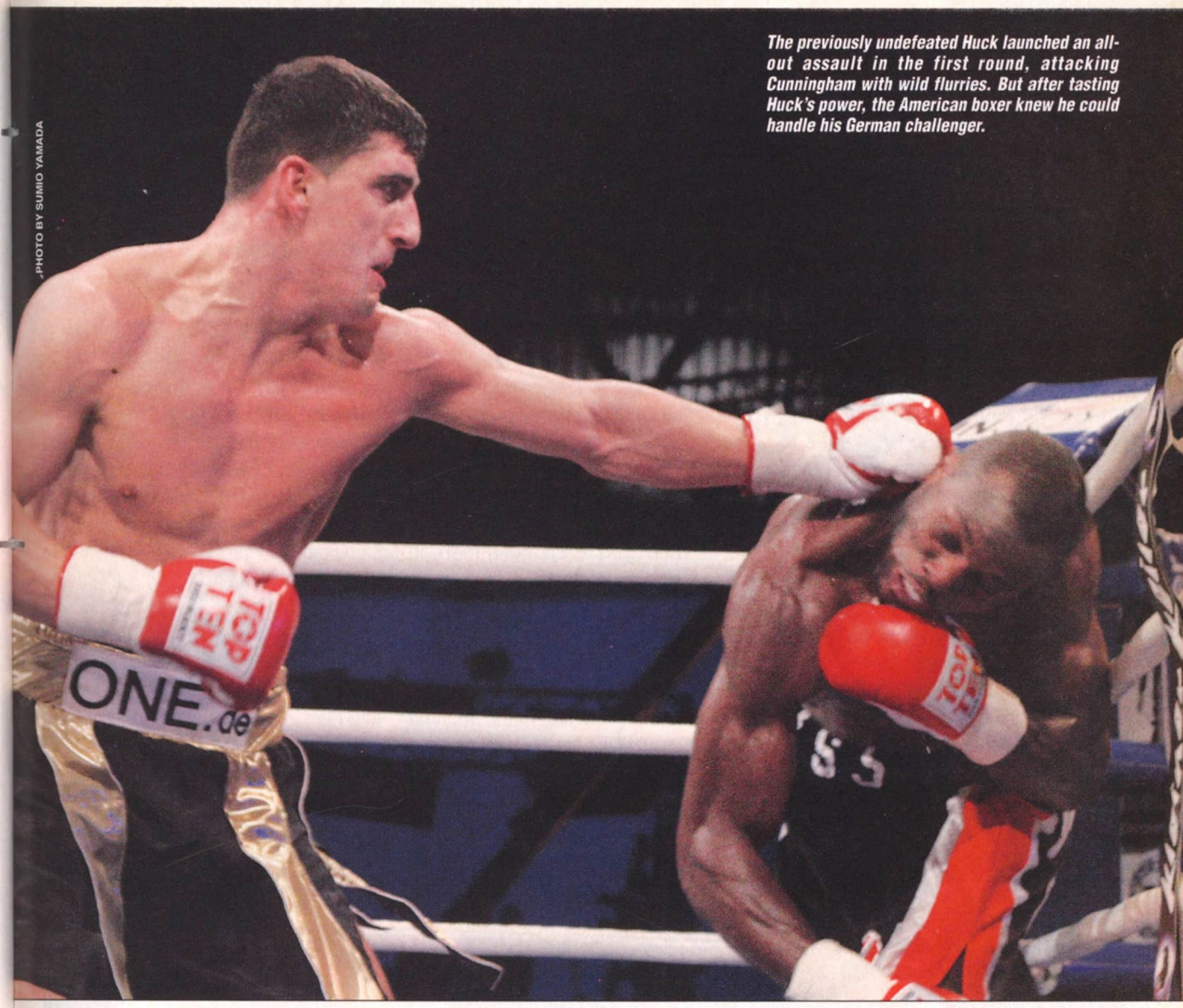

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

The previously undefeated Huck launched an all-out assault in the first round, attacking Cunningham with wild flurries. But after tasting Huck's power, the American boxer knew he could handle his German challenger.

Before leaving, Livvy and I had some reservations as to how we would be treated, based on what we'd experienced during my two trips to Poland. It was awful both times. The first time, I worked in a gym with a lumpy canvas that had dips and lumps. It wasn't a ring, it was a sandbox covered with plastic.

The second fight, we worked in a bare conference room that we had to rearrange every day, taking all the chairs and tables out. There was no ring, no heavybags. The promoter wanted to do everything they could to give Wlodarczyk an edge.

I basically got treated like dirt in Poland, but things were better in Germany; we were treated professionally. We stayed in Berlin for the first five days, and the climate was cold. It was real crisp, and if you are outside for five minutes, it can get to your bones.

One thing I've noticed is that Europeans always look very serious, but once you start talking to them, they are very nice. The other thing I noticed in Germany is that nobody ever says, "Excuse me." We'd always get bumped, and they keep walking and don't say anything. I bumped into someone and said, "Excuse me," but they kept walking. I realized that's the way it is.

Germany was nice, much better than Poland. If I got a chance to go back to Europe on vacation, I'd go to Germany. There were dark-skinned people there too, since there are a few Army bases in Germany. Nobody pointed and said, "There's the black man." In Poland, people followed us and pointed.

Fans and media in Europe treat fighters like world-class athletes. They treat boxers the way they should be treated, the way I would like to be treated in the United States. Over here, you have to be Oscar, Floyd, or Lennox Lewis to get any respect or attention.

As the Huck fight got closer, I felt good. We had a strategy in place, but before putting it into action, there were media obligations. The final press conference was held at a car dealership in front of about 50 people. The weigh-in was bigger. They had about 200 people there, and that's when we were told that the cable network showing the fight would go out to 5 million homes. It would have made me a little nervous knowing there were 5 million people in the stadium.

The night before the fight, Livvy and I were a little antsy. Marc Abrams, my publicist, came to Germany with us and brought fight tapes, so I watched the Mayweather-Ricky Hatton fight. That got me going. Marc was great. He kept everyone laughing and loose.

During the buildup, Huck was real disrespectful, but I controlled my anger outwardly. Huck found out we had bought a pizza shop, and he said he'd smash my face like a pizza and I'd be making pizza the rest of my life. I laughed. If it was a comedian's contest, he won.

I stayed cool. When it comes to boxing, it's not personal. If I get mad or allow a fighter get me mad, I'd lose control of what I have to do. Huck tried to push some buttons, but it didn't work. Hey, I grew up in Philly, with the threat of getting shot every day. I went to school with enemies who had guns, so nothing he said was going to bother me.

I knew I was fighting around midnight, so four days before the fight I came to the conclusion that we'd go to sleep at 11 p.m. and wake up at 1 a.m. We'd have breakfast and take a nap after 8 until 2 in the afternoon. That's the way I coped with the time change.

Fight night came. We ate around four in the afternoon and they picked us up in a van around 8:30. I kept my routine the same, but I couldn't nap. I was ready to go. When I got ready in the dressing room, I felt good, confident.

The walk-in was long. I like to soak in the environment. I kept thinking, *This is my ring tonight, this is mine.* What struck me the most was hearing the National Anthem. I was representing the United States, under the same flag I served under in the Navy. I'll be honest with you, I started getting choked up when I heard those words. It means something, especially hearing those words when you're standing there in a foreign country. It's like you're in the Olympics.

During training, I kept hearing about Huck's power. As a fighter, you don't want to get hit with anything, but I took a right from him in the first round and that told me I could take his shot. I countered with a right. My plan was to go to his body a lot and sap his power. After the first round, I felt great. I learned what he was able to do, what I allowed him to do, and what I could do.

The second, third, and fourth rounds I wanted to give him different looks. I was even taunting him. He didn't speak any English, but I'd say things like, "You don't want to jab, don't throw the right hand," and he was looking at me hesitantly. It was like his first experience with sex, he didn't know what he was doing.

By the fifth, I was thinking he didn't want to fight. I was expecting this workhorse, this powerhouse. *Was this it from him?* I worked my game plan and stuck to it. I rocked him with a right uppercut. He hadn't landed anything significant to that point.

In the sixth I hit him with a jab and then a right hook that split his left ear. Once I saw that, I went after the ear. He came out in the seventh and there was blood dripping on his shoulder. I told him, "You have something on your shoulder," and he actually looked. *Bang!* I popped him with a jab in his face.

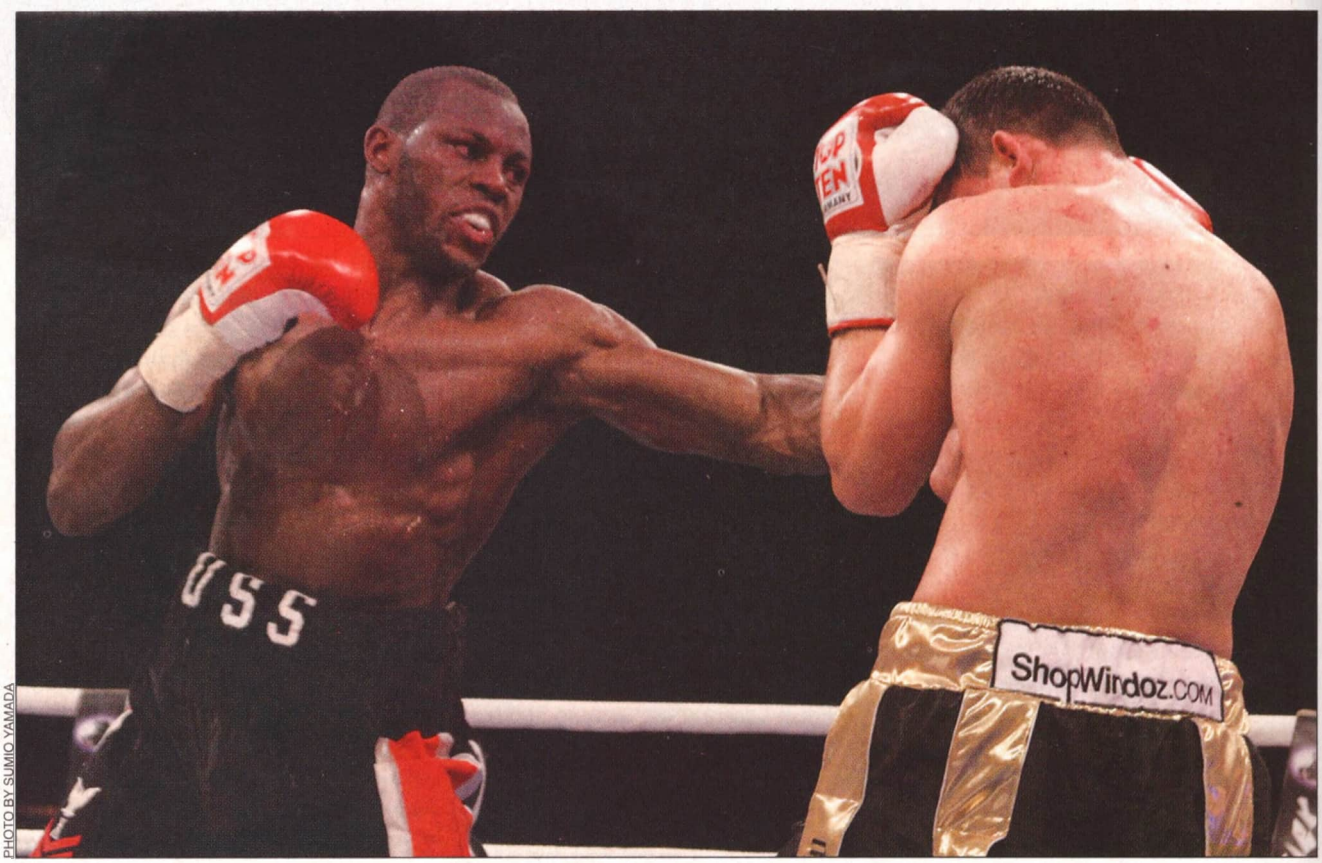

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Cunningham found his rhythm in the second round, slamming away with his left jab. Huck tried stealing rounds, coming on strong in the beginning, taking off the middle, and rallying late. But it didn't work against Cunningham's steady work rate and accurate punching.

By the 11th round, Cunningham had Huck reeling and in trouble. The Philadelphian's trainer told him the German was ready to go, so Cunningham unleashed a blistering attack in the 12th that finished Huck with just over a minute left in the fight.

By the eighth, I was walking him down. You can tell you're hurting the other guy, because he doesn't do anything, and Huck wasn't doing anything.

I took the ninth round off, but I had a good 10th, and I remember thinking there was no way I could be behind. I thought I could be up 7-3 or 8-2. No question in my mind. But I wanted to win the last two rounds. I worked the plan, catching him with bigger and harder shots. I always get stronger as the fight goes on.

The 11th went well, and I rocked him a little. But my trainer, Anthony Chase, noticed something. He thought he was ready to go and he told me that I could get the guy out after the 11th, but I wanted to stay within the game plan, then turn up the volume.

I boxed him early in the 12th, but I sensed he was getting desperate. His corner was telling him to knock me out. I caught him with a straight 1-2 early. I didn't know the right hand hurt him as much as it did, but he grabbed me. It was one of those hang-on-for-dear-life grabs. The ref (Canadian Marlon Wright) pushed us apart, and Huck stepped back and fell. The ref called it a slip. But I knew he was out on his feet.

When Huck got up, his hands were down and he was on his heels. He had nothing. I ran at him and I hit him with everything. I'm saying to myself, *When is the ref going to stop this fight?* Huck wobbled over to the other side of the ring, and I kept chasing him. I had my back to his corner and I didn't even see his corner throw in the towel.

Once the ref stopped it (at the 1:56 mark), I just lost my legs and fell. I was in tears. Chase and assistant trainer Buddy Osborn both lifted me up. I started to get the feeling back in my legs. I had to go over to Huck and tell him he'd be back. I wanted to just lay there in that ring and say, "Thank you, God." I'm still amazed by what happened.

Huck was talking all this pizza stuff before the fight, but after the fight, Huck's face was so bruised up that Livvy told me it looked like a pepperoni pizza.

We were told 5 million saw the fight. I was like a celebrity in Germany. We got mobbed at the airports. People were asking me for my autograph and they wanted to take pictures with me. Then when we got back home and walked through the airport in Philly, nobody was there. But it wasn't sad to us. Livvy and I looked at each other and laughed.

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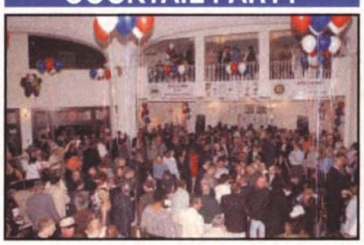

Stars . . . Boxers and fans enjoy VIP cocktail party reception.

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Ricardo Lopez points to his championship trunks.

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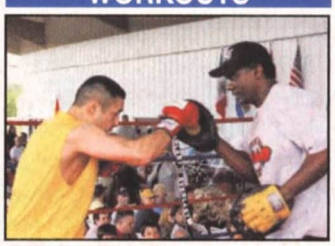

Oscar Diaz works the bag mitts with Tommy Brooks during public workout.

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What If...

THE RING Speculates On What A Difference One Detail Can Make

By Eric Raskin

Chances are there's a law prohibiting boxing magazines from referencing Gwyneth Paltrow chick flicks—and if there isn't, there should be—but we'll go ahead and break the law and wuss-ify this issue of THE RING a bit anyway. The 1998 movie *Sliding Doors*, starring the aforementioned Oscar winner, illustrated the impact split-second timing can make by following two entirely separate storylines: one in which Paltrow's character catches her subway train, and one in which she misses it by half a step. The former turned out to be a fluffy romantic story, the latter a dismal tragedy. The divergence was perhaps a bit extreme, but the general idea was not unrealistic; sometimes the alteration of one small detail can cause a monumental shakeup.

The same is true in boxing. Imagine how the world would be different today if Angelo Dundee had let Muhammad Ali quit when his eyes were burning during his first fight with Sonny Liston. Or if the ref had stopped the Rocky Marciano-Ezzard Charles fight on account of "The Rock's" nose splitting nearly in half. Or if Salvador Sanchez' Porsche hadn't started on the morning of August 12, 1982.

One decision—whether by a fighter, a trainer, a ref, or a judge—can have a ripple effect on millions of lives. Sometimes for the better. Sometimes for the worse. Sometimes just for the different.

At the very start of the current millennium, in the May 2000 issue, THE RING had some fun with the "what if" question, analyzing how the boxing world would have been impacted if certain realities had not come to pass. In the eight years since, there's been no shortage of "sliding doors" in the fight game, no shortage of "what if" scenarios with intriguing alternate outcomes. So we're at it again, hypothesizing about what might have been if one detail had differed.

Of course, we all know that the past cannot be changed. But that doesn't make it any less fascinating to imagine what a different past might mean for the present and the future. So here are 10 intriguing "what ifs" from the current millennium. Who needs a time machine to monkey with the past when you have THE RING to do it for you?

What If...

9/11 Had Happened A Week Later?

Obviously, boxing is the least of people's concerns when it comes to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Had the hijackers chosen the following Tuesday instead, or any other random date for that matter, different lives would have been lost, maybe the fourth plane would have hit its intended target instead of crashing in a Western Pennsylvania field, and maybe our world would be totally unlike the world we currently know. In a relative sense, the impact of 9/11 on the fight game was minimal.

But it still profoundly affected one major fight. Bernard Hopkins vs. Felix Trinidad for the undisputed middleweight championship of the world was scheduled for September 15 at Madison Square Garden, and unavoidably, it was postponed due to the physical and emotional trauma that came with the destruction of the World Trade Center. The fight instead happened two weeks later, on September 29. You all know the result: Hopkins by 12th-round knockout, in what was a major upset at the time.

The question is, if the fight had never been postponed, if it had come off as scheduled on September 15, would the outcome have been different? It's been reported that Trinidad's training suffered as a result of the postponement—that he was cruising right along, ready to peak physically on the 15th, but struggled with the letdown of not fighting on that date. He struggled with having to stay on weight an extra two weeks, and with having broken camp to come to New York and then extending training away from the familiar surroundings of Puerto Rico.

PHOTO BY JOSE JIMENEZ/PRIMERA HORA/GETTY IMAGES

The World Trade Center attack took place four days prior to the original Hopkins-Trinidad date

For Hopkins, the delay was less problematic. "The Executioner" is always in fighting shape; what's an extra two weeks of hard work to someone who never really breaks training? Given that he produced the most perfect and most focused boxing performance of his career when the fight actually happened on September 29, it's fair to say that the postponement had no adverse effects on the Philly fighter.

So we've established that "Tito" might have been better on the original date, and Hopkins couldn't possibly have been any better. Is that enough to change history and make Trinidad the 160-pound champ?

We hate to be anticlimactic here in the first of our 10 "what if" analyses, but this is one case where boxing history wasn't altered all that dramatically. If the fight had happened two weeks earlier, yes, it probably would have been a tad more competitive. But knowing now what we didn't know then, Trinidad simply didn't have what it took to beat Hopkins. If they fought 100 times, Hopkins would win at least 95 of them. He was taller, stronger, much smarter, and much more versatile. Trinidad was a great but somewhat one-dimensional fighter who never dealt well with clever boxers who knew how to use their legs. Hopkins was (and still is) a great multi-dimensional fighter, capable of making mid-fight adjustments to take control of close bouts. Is it likely that on September 15, 2001, Trinidad would have won a round or two more than he did? Sure.

And maybe he would have lasted the distance instead of getting kayoed in the 12th if his conditioning and focus had been that tiny bit better. But the end result, Hopkins becoming undisputed champ, would have been the same. On either date, Don King still would have to scramble for a trophy to present to Hopkins.

One thing worth noting: The atmosphere would have been very different without 9/11. Rather than a crowd infused with pockets of American patriotism and with Trinidad fans unsure of how raucously to behave at a post-9/11 sporting event, it would have been the typical Tito Garden experience, with the Puerto Rican fans reaching ridiculous decibel levels.

But a more boisterous crowd wouldn't have changed history. Neither Hopkins' path nor Trinidad's path would have been altered. At least not radically.

9/11 shook America, led to a war that's still going on 6½ years later, ended lives, and changed the world. But its impact on boxing, and on the major fight that was postponed, can probably be dismissed.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

The postponement didn't seem to ruffle "The Executioner"

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Hopkins stops Trinidad in the 12th round to unify the middleweight title

What If...

Roy Jones Had Stayed At Heavyweight?

On March 1, 2003, Roy Jones, weighing 193 pounds, 16 above his previous career high, defeated 226-pound John Ruiz for the WBA heavyweight belt. Eight months later, without having fought again as a heavyweight, Jones shed that extra weight—most of which was muscle—and defended the world light heavyweight title against Antonio Tarver. Jones came into that first Tarver fight recognized universally as the pound-for-pound king. But from the moment the opening bell rang against Tarver, Jones hasn't resembled a pound-for-pounder at all.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Jones rocks Ruiz' world en route to comprehensive 12-round decision

He was lethargic as he won a hotly disputed majority decision over Tarver, and then, despite fighting with a little extra bounce in his step for the first few minutes of the rematch, the self-styled "Superman" got flattened by a single left hand in the second round. Next came a devastating knockout loss to supposed soft touch Glen Johnson, then another defeat, this one by decision, to Tarver. Jones climbed the heavyweight mountain (not its highest peak, but hey, it still counts as a climb), and then fell from his lofty perch as far and as hard as any fighter ever has.

The reason, according to Jones, is that gaining and then shedding all that muscle weight had a dire physical effect. Obviously, based on his performance against Ruiz, the gaining went just fine. The transformation from dominator to dominated came courtesy of the shedding. So what if the shedding had never happened? What if Jones remained a heavyweight for the rest of his career, rather than making a one-and-done experiment out of it?

That decision would have had a serious impact on two different divisions. The more obvious one is light heavyweight, where, let's face it, Tarver and Johnson made their names off of beating Jones. It's quite possible that neither career would have taken off, neither fighter ever would have been recognized as the legit champ, and both would still be struggling today for exposure on HBO or Showtime. Certainly, Johnson wouldn't have been 2004's Fighter of the Year if Jones had stayed put at heavyweight. And for Tarver, he could have probably kissed that role as Mason "The Line" Dixon in *Rocky Balboa* goodbye. In fact, Jones, who did a bit of acting in the *Matrix* sequels, would have been perfect for the part. Maybe he could have become the most successful fighter-turned-actor since Tex Cobb if he'd starred opposite Sylvester Stallone in the sixth *Rocky* movie.

At heavyweight, the result of Jones keeping the weight on is harder to pinpoint. There was talk of him challenging the division's true champion, Lennox Lewis, but is it realistic to believe that "Reluctant Roy" was ever going to get into the ring with

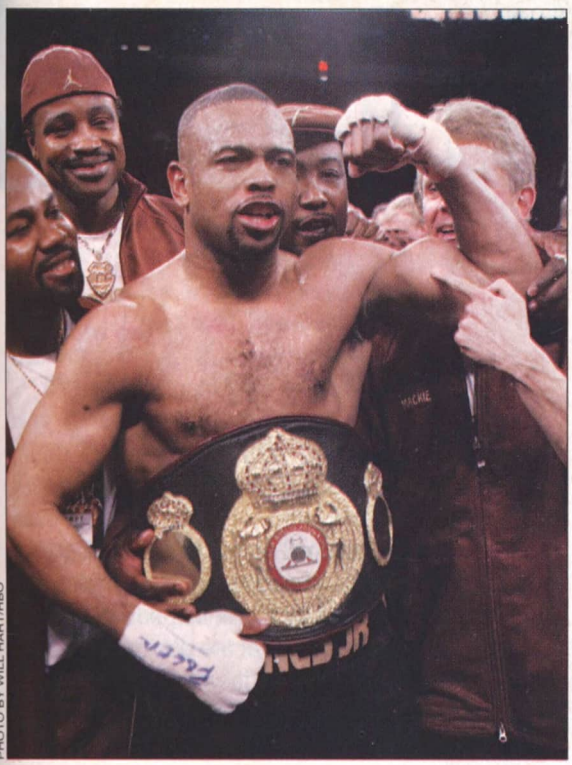


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

We'll never know what would have happened if Jones had defended the heavyweight WBA belt?

a guy 6'5", 245 pounds, with the skill set of Lewis? No way. Jones spent an entire careering picking and choosing the least threatening opponents he could get away with fighting.

However, the man Lewis had knocked out the previous year, Mike Tyson, was a reasonable option. And that fight would have been *enormous*. It certainly would have been the biggest moneymaker of Jones' career, and as we can safely say, based on Tyson's '04 and '05 losses to Danny Williams and Kevin McBride, Jones would have had an excellent chance of beating "Iron Mike." He probably could have even exhausted and TKO'd the former undisputed heavyweight champ.

Can you imagine how different Jones' legacy would be if that scenario had come to pass? Say he'd beaten Tyson in a million-buy PPV fight, then handpicked a safe heavyweight opponent to get his 50th career win and retired with a record of 50-1, with the only loss coming via disqualification. If that had happened, there's a very good chance we're all sitting around right now talking about Sugar Ray Robinson, Henry Armstrong, Willie Pep, Muhammad Ali, and Roy Jones as we debate who the greatest boxer of all-time was.

Instead, our reality finds us looking at a guy with four losses, two by knockout, wondering if he ever had a decent chin or if he would have gotten drilled by any and all of the great light heavyweights in ring history. Jones is still a no-brainer first-ballot Hall of Famer, but his historical standing has been diminished tremendously by those losses to Tarver and Johnson.

The thing about staying at heavyweight is that there would have been so much less risk to Jones' reputation. If he'd fought Tyson or Evander Holyfield (another option being discussed in '03) and gotten caught with a big punch and knocked out, everyone would have excused it as an unfortunate consequence of the size differential. It wouldn't have proven that Jones has no chin (did people say that about Bob Foster when he got wrecked by Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier?), and it wouldn't have affected his standing among the all-time great light heavyweights.

It's easy to say this in hindsight, but leaving the heavyweight division was a monumental misstep by Jones.

Not that Antonio Tarver and Glen Johnson are complaining.

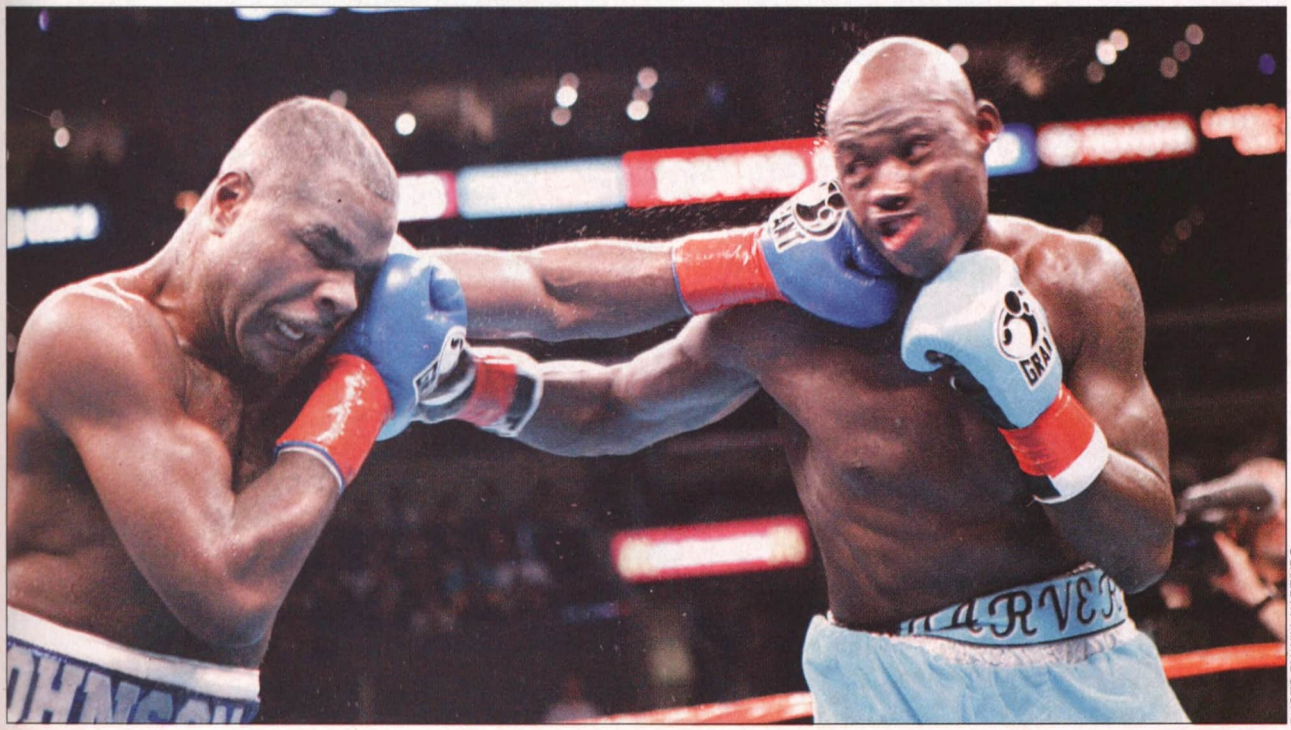


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Johnson and Tarver could not have made their reputations knocking out Jones if he'd stayed at heavyweight

What If...

Vitali Klitschko Had Been Allowed Out For Round Seven?

It was one of the great, unexpected heavyweight slugfests of modern times. At Los Angeles' Staples Center on June 21, 2003, underdog challenger Vitali Klitschko took charge early, staggering champion Lennox Lewis with a barrage of right hands in a clumsy but rousing second round. In the third round, Lewis opened up a nasty cut on Klitschko's left eye, but the Ukrainian ignored the blood and kept blasting the champ with heavy shots.

Exhaustion was setting in for both behemoths in the fourth, and Lewis started finding a home for his clubbing overhand right. The Brit did damage with his uppercuts and hooks in the fifth, opening a second cut under Klitschko's left eye, but the champ's tired legs barely kept him upright as he landed his punches. The sixth round was pure war, no technique, just two gutsy giants emptying their guns. When the bell rang, Lewis slumped almost lifelessly on his stool. Across the ring, Klitschko's cuts had become horrifically deep, and referee Lou Moret stopped the contest on the advice of the doctor.

For Lewis, it wasn't pretty, but he escaped with his title. It was a controversial victory. It was a memorable victory. And it was Lewis' final victory, as he proceeded to retire without ever fighting again.

Moret was well within his rights to stop the fight; Klitschko looked more

PHOTO BY JEFF GOSS/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Had the ref allowed the fight to go another few rounds, Klitschko might have beaten Lewis

like he'd been in a machete fight than a boxing match. But plenty of referees wouldn't have stopped it. Plenty of them would have said, *Hey, this is for the heavyweight championship of the world*, and let the bout continue.

And how very different life might be for Klitschko and Lewis, along with everyone else in the heavyweight division, if that had been the ref's decision.

The question of who would have won if the fight had continued is very much open for debate. As far as winning rounds goes, Lewis seemed to have momentum on his side. He was trailing 58-56 on all three cards, but he was closing the gap. As far as stamina goes, Klitschko seemed to have the edge. Lewis, who weighed a career-high 256½ pounds and may not have trained his hardest (he was expecting to fight Kirk Johnson until two weeks before fight night), looked completely spent after round six. Klitschko was tired too, but he had enough energy to spazz out and protest when Moret stopped the fight.

The guess here is that Klitschko, six years younger and better conditioned, would have won the fight if it had gone on. Is that a statement made with real conviction? No. Lewis certainly could have won. But then nothing changes, except for maybe Klitschko's eye getting damaged worse and his career ending sooner as a result. The far more interesting scenario to explore is the one in which Klitschko wins. So let's suspend disbelief from here on out and act as though that was more than just a 50/50 possibility.

If Klitschko had won—let's say he stopped a drained Lewis in the seventh or eighth—there's almost no chance this would have been the final fight for the dreadlocked "boxing-ologist." When Lewis retired in '04 at age 38, conventional wisdom says it was because he saw the proverbial writing on the wall and smartly viewed it as his last chance to exit on top. Had he lost to Vitali, the personal motivation for a rematch would have been enormous, especially with Lewis' track record for avenging losses. As with his defeat to Hasim Rahman, Lewis would feel he could reverse the result if he got into better shape and took the opponent more seriously the second time around.

PHOTO BY THOMAS LOHNES/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

The spotlight would not have shone so bright on Wladimir if brother Vitali had beaten Lewis

The likely scenario is that we would have seen an immediate rematch—and that Klitschko, who gained great confidence from his heroic performance against Lewis, would have been the favorite to repeat the victory over the aging ex-champ. Whether or not Lewis would have retired after that is hard to say, but this much is certain: The heavyweight title lineage would have remained intact, and Klitschko would have been extra marketable as a result of his wins over Lewis.

In other words, the heavyweight division would have been a little bit healthier in the immediate post-Lewis era than it actually has been. However, there's no reason to believe Klitschko's injury problems wouldn't have existed in this alternate reality. Sometime in his next few bouts, the Ukrainian's knees and back would still have betrayed him. And that would have left us in the same position we're currently in: with a broken heavyweight lineage.

But one thing that would be different is that the comeback Vitali is currently pursuing would be more eagerly anticipated by fans. After all, the elder Klitschko brother would still be the linear champ, just as Muhammad Ali was when he un-retired and lost to Larry Holmes.

At the same time, the excellent recent work of baby bro Wladimir Klitschko wouldn't mean quite as much. Rather than being viewed as the world's clear leading heavyweight, Wladimir would be regarded as something of a placeholder for his brother.

Oh, and let's not forget this key detail: If Lewis had ended his career not as world champ, but with two straight losses to Vitali Klitschko, it's anybody's guess whether HBO would still have hired him as a broadcaster or given the job to someone with a personality. Not to mention how this might have affected the cast of *The Celebrity Apprentice* ...

What If...

Joe Mesi Had Ducked One Key Punch From Vassiliy Jirov?

"Baby" Joe Mesi had it all: He was handsome, he was articulate, he could sell 20,000 tickets in Buffalo against a truck driver or a burger flipper, and he was a heavyweight with a zero at the end of his record. There simply were no negatives.

Until his brain scan results came in.

Shortly after his March 13, 2004, victory over former cruiserweight titlist Vassiliy Jirov, word spread that Mesi had suffered two subdural hematomas, resulting in an indefinite suspension of his boxing license by the Nevada State Athletic Commission.

Everything was going swimmingly through eight rounds, Mesi enjoying a 79-73 lead on all cards as he dished out an unspectacular but professional and focused beating on Jirov. But in the ninth, a single punch, a right hand that landed on the back of the head, changed everything. It dropped Mesi to his knees. He rose and survived the round, but he was fighting in a fog (he later said he remembered nothing after that punch) and was far too available a target. He was floored again one minute into round 10, then hit the deck for a third time with 50 seconds to go. Mesi did everything he could not to touch down again, and he made it to the final bell with a one-point advantage still in his favor on all three cards. Baby Joe got the "W." But the unofficial "L" was coming when the MRI results were returned.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Mesi was never the same after Jirov decked him

Mesi didn't fight for two years, took advantage of loopholes in the system to get re-licensed by commissions in Puerto Rico, Louisiana, Arkansas, Michigan, West Virginia, and Rhode Island, and now with a record of 36-0 (29), looks to have regained some of his previous form but is struggling mightily to be taken seriously in the boxing world. It's likely that Mesi will never again fight in New York or Nevada, will never again fight on HBO, will never again be considered a contender.

Nobody knows for sure if that right hand to the back of the head in round nine was what caused the injuries that surfaced on Mesi's MRI. But it at least caused his defenses to weaken, setting him up for other punches that may have done the damage, so one way or another, that one punch turned his life upside-down. So just what would the right-side-up world look like if Mesi had dipped his head two inches lower when Jirov let that punch go?

Mesi made $450,000 for the Jirov fight, and there was more green awaiting in his next fight, the third of his three-fight HBO contract. Specifically, there was talk of Mesi battling Mike Tyson, who at the time had not yet lost to Danny Williams and was coming off a 49-second blowout over Clifford

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Was this the punch that gave Mesi a brain bleed?

Etienne. We all know now how far gone Tyson was by '04. If Mesi had gotten that July PPV date opposite Tyson that Williams got—and remember, we're talking about a completely healthy Mesi who would have beaten Jirov by 99-91 decision—it very well could have been the victory that elevated the then-30-year-old to mainstream stardom. Undoubtedly, Tyson would have been a threat to knock Mesi out for the first two rounds or so. But Mesi had shown in other fights that he could box cautiously early on, and chances are he could've gotten Tyson into those dreaded middle rounds and taken him out.

From there, any number of options would have been possible. Mesi was ranked 10th by THE RING even after the Jirov disaster, so if you change the Jirov result to an easy win and add a victory over Tyson, you're talking about Baby Joe knocking on the door of the top five. A fight against Vitali Klitschko (who'd just won the vacant RING title against Corrie Sanders) would have done big business at Madison Square Garden, and fights against James Toney, Hasim Rahman, Andrew Golota, and Lamon Brewster (all top-10 fighters at the time) would have been easy sells as well. Mesi would have been a huge underdog against Klitschko, and decent-sized 'dog against Toney or Rahman, but losing to a veteran of that stature doesn't usually ruin a career.

The point is, Mesi was looking at a couple of seven-figure paydays in '04 and '05, and maybe he was even looking at a long career fighting on HBO and pay-per-view. No impartial observer will tell you he was a future champion. (It might even be a stretch to say he could have been a future titlist, although if Shannon Briggs could claim the WBO belt, nothing is impossible.) But he was a future player who could have kept mainstream America interested in the heavyweight division at a time when fans had very few Americans to get behind.

Maybe he'd be all used up by now if he'd kept fighting top contenders throughout '04 and '05 instead of sitting on the sidelines. But something tells us that's a risk Mesi would be willing to take if he could go back in time to the Jirov fight and duck just a little bit lower.

PHOTO BY MATTHEW STOCKMAN/GETTY IMAGES

Tyson might not have fought Williams if Mesi had not been injured

What If...

The Three-Knockdown Rule Had Been In Effect For Pacquiao-Marquez?

Right around the time this magazine was to hit the newsstands, Manny Pacquiao and Juan Manuel Marquez were scheduled for a world championship rematch to their spectacular May 8, 2004, battle. Had the three-knockdown rule been in effect for their first fight, among other ways in which history would have changed, we almost certainly never would have seen Pacquiao-Marquez II.

Pacquiao has to rank as one of the most explosive left-hand punchers in boxing history, and in that '04 showdown with Marquez, the Filipino was simply awesome with his money punch in the opening round. Even though Marquez knew it was coming, he just couldn't adjust to the speed and couldn't get out of the way. Nearly every time "Pac-Man" threw the left, it found the Mexican's chin, and nearly every time it found his chin, down he went. The first knockdown was scored 90 seconds into the round. Marquez seemed fine when he stood up, but 25 seconds later he was down again. He shook that one off, but with 45 seconds left on the clock, the southpaw left dropped him for a third time.

Using the three-knockdown rule—which is still in effect in New York, among other jurisdictions—the fight at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas would have been over then and there, referee Joe Cortez having no choice but to wave it off at the 2:15 mark.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Marquez and Pacquiao wouldn't have needed a rematch if the three-knockdown rule had been in effect the first time

The most clear and immediate impact, had that been the case, is that we as fans would have been robbed of one of the most thrilling fights of 2004 and of one of the greatest comebacks in pugilistic history. Marquez lost the second round, but he stayed on his feet throughout. In the third, the incredible rally began. Marquez started timing Pacquiao, started outboxing him, started cutting into his five-point lead. The action never slowed down, and the drama only picked up, because with just a couple of rounds to go, it was either man's fight to win. In the end, one judge had Pacquiao ahead by an out-of-whack five points, another judge had

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Mutual respect following Marquez and Pacquiao following thrilling 2004 draw

Marquez ahead by the same ludicrous margin, and the third judge had it even. A split draw was the result.

The difference in what that gutsy draw did for Marquez' career versus having a "KO by 1" on his record is beyond profound. Four years earlier, Marquez gave a highly disappointing performance as he lost to Freddie Norwood in his first title fight. Marquez embarked on a 13-fight winning streak, gradually undoing the damage of that lackluster loss and making himself a hero to the hardcore once more. Had it been three knockdowns and done for him against Pac-Man, Marquez' career would have been left swirling at the bottom of the toilet bowl. He would have been branded a guy who chokes in his biggest fights. He never would have gotten a fight with Marco Antonio Barrera (as he did in March '07, winning a unanimous decision). It's tough to come back from first-round knockout losses, especially when you're already 30 years old. The rally he staged from rounds two through 12 saved Marquez' reputation and his boxing career.

For Pacquiao, meanwhile, the draw didn't necessarily hurt his momentum. But it didn't do for him what that "KO 1" would have. A "KO 11" over Barrera followed by a "KO 1" over Marquez would have put Pacquiao in the discussion for pound-for-pound supremacy (a discussion that, at the time, centered around Bernard Hopkins and Floyd Mayweather). It would have made him the ultimate Mexican slayer before he even got into the ring with Erik Morales. And, oh yes, when he did square off against Morales (their first fight happened in March '05, and there's no reason to think a first-round kayo of Marquez would have changed that), it would have been *huge*. It would have been "El Terrible" fighting for the pride of a nation, and it would have been Pacquiao fighting to possibly surpass B-Hop and Pretty Boy on that P-4-P list.

And had Morales gone on to defeat Pacquiao (no reason that result should change), it would have done wonders for his standing among the all-time Mexican greats. Despite having lost the rubber match to Barrera in '04, a victory over a seemingly unbeatable Pac-Man would have catapulted Morales past Barrera in the hearts of Mexicans.

And taking it one step farther, Zahir Raheem beating Morales six months later would have been almost Douglas-Tyson-esque.

Clearly, there was a major potential snowball effect to changing the result of Pacquiao-Marquez I. And as we mentioned at the top, there wouldn't be a need to call it "Pacquiao-Marquez I," because there wasn't going to be a Pacquiao-Marquez II if the fight had only lasted 2 minutes 15 seconds.

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

The Morales-Pacquiao trilogy would have been even bigger if Pac-Man had beaten Marquez

What If...

Felix Sturm Had Gotten The Decision Over Oscar De La Hoya?

When tuneup fights have blown up in promoters' faces in the last couple of years, there's been a tendency for those promoters to pretend the tuneup never happened. Remember Erik Morales losing in a shocker against Zahir Raheem? That didn't prevent Top Rank from plowing ahead with Morales-Manny Pacquiao II. Or how about Carlos Baldomir spoiling that big Zab Judah-Floyd Mayweather pay-per-view showdown? It still went ahead, and it was still on pay-per-view, and they even tried to tell us it was still a title fight.

But in June 2004, that trend hadn't really started yet. The tuneup fights weren't completely meaningless and pointless; if someone lost his tuneup, he lost the mega-fight that was waiting on the other side. And that was the idea behind the Bernard Hopkins-Robert Allen and Oscar De La Hoya-Felix Sturm doubleheader (or, as many people called it, "infomercial") on June 6, 2004: Hopkins and De La Hoya both had to win these apparent mismatches, and if they did, it was onto a true superfight on September 18 for the undisputed middleweight championship of the world.

Hopkins did his part, no problem. He scored a seventh-round knockdown and coasted to a decision over Allen by eight, 12, and 12 points.

De La Hoya coasted too. The problem was, he did his coasting during training camp. "The Golden Boy" beefed up to middleweight the wrong way and came into the Sturm fight with love handles. Oscar started fast, aggressively taking the fight to Sturm and carrying most of the early rounds with his impressive work rate. But by round six, De La Hoya's conditioning issues were surfacing, he couldn't get out of the way of Sturm's jab, and the Hopkins fight was looking iffy. There were rounds here and there in which you could make an argument for De La Hoya, but for the most part, Sturm was controlling the second half of the fight.

When it was over, most of the ringside press had Sturm winning a close

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Underdog Sturm came very close to beating De La Hoya

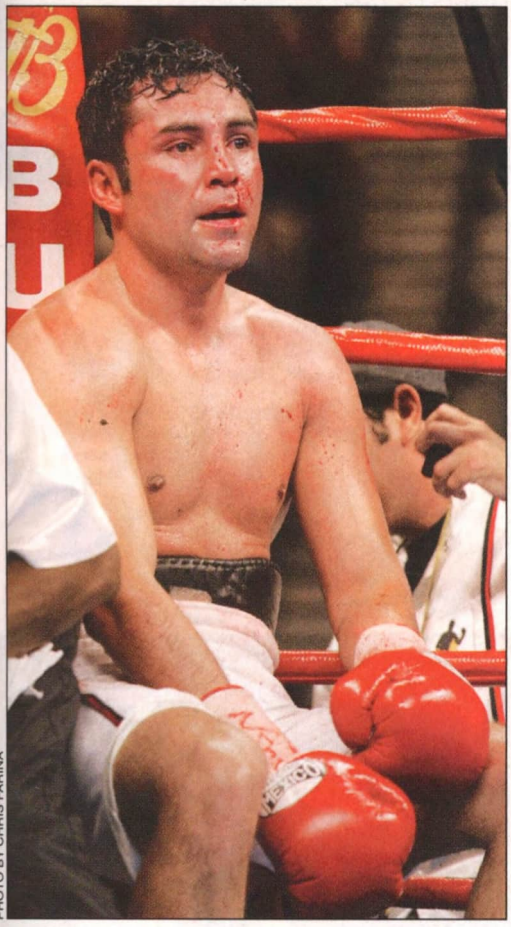


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

A weary, blood-splattered Golden Boy between rounds of the Sturm fight

decision. Some (this writer included) had it a draw. Very few people actually thought The Golden Boy won the fight. But all three Las Vegas judges were among those very few, each scoring it seven rounds to five, 115-113, in favor of De La Hoya.

Obviously, changing one judge's card wouldn't have made a difference. But what if you changed them all? What if all three of them saw the same fight most of the media and fans saw, and had Sturm on top by those same 115-113 margins?

For starters, Hopkins vs. De La Hoya would have been ruined. All of the luster would have been removed from the matchup. It simply wouldn't have made sense anymore.

Losing out on that fight would have been devastating to Hopkins, both financially (he ultimately made more than $10-million for fighting De La Hoya) and with regard to his legacy (becoming the only man to kayo Oscar elevated him to another level, especially in terms of mainstream recognition). Maybe he could've gotten the fight at a later date, after Oscar had had time to rebuild himself (perhaps by avenging the loss to Sturm). But nothing is ever certain, and Hopkins may already have lost the championship to Jermain Taylor before an Oscar fight became realistic.

Plus, what did Oscar do right after the Hopkins fight? He dropped back down in weight, acknowledging that he didn't belong at middleweight. Had he lost to Sturm, he may have simply made that concession on the spot and never fought at 160 again.

Just as a De La Hoya loss would have been devastating for Hopkins, it would have been hugely beneficial for Sturm. Surely, there would have been another big HBO payday in his future—maybe against Hopkins for the world title. Sturm has made decent money fighting in Germany for the last three years, but he's done nothing to increase his profile in America or become a player in the mix of major 160-pound fights. An upset win over De La Hoya would have surely meant more of Sturm in the States—if not against Hopkins, maybe against old amateur rival Taylor.

The future repercussions for De La Hoya, had the judges not sided with him, are harder to gauge. As it stands now, the losses on De La Hoya's record are all against future Hall of Famers: Felix Trinidad, Shane Mosley, Floyd Mayweather, and Hopkins. A loss to Sturm wouldn't have kept Oscar out of Canastota, but it would have been a serious blow to his legacy just the same. It's hard to say whether it would have prevented the richest fight in history against Mayweather three years later, but anything's possible. Maybe a loss to Sturm would have served as a wakeup call and De La Hoya would have gotten serious and fought three times a year since then. Or maybe it would have convinced him to retire immediately afterward at age 31.

Much as we all love boxing, we must admit the sport has its flaws, and it's disturbing to consider how much the arbitrary (or sometimes biased) views of the judges can affect history. This was by no means a robbery for the ages, just a close fight that went the superstar's way. But put three different judges in those seats, and the career of our sport's premier moneyman might look very different, potentially shaking up the long-term health of the fight game.

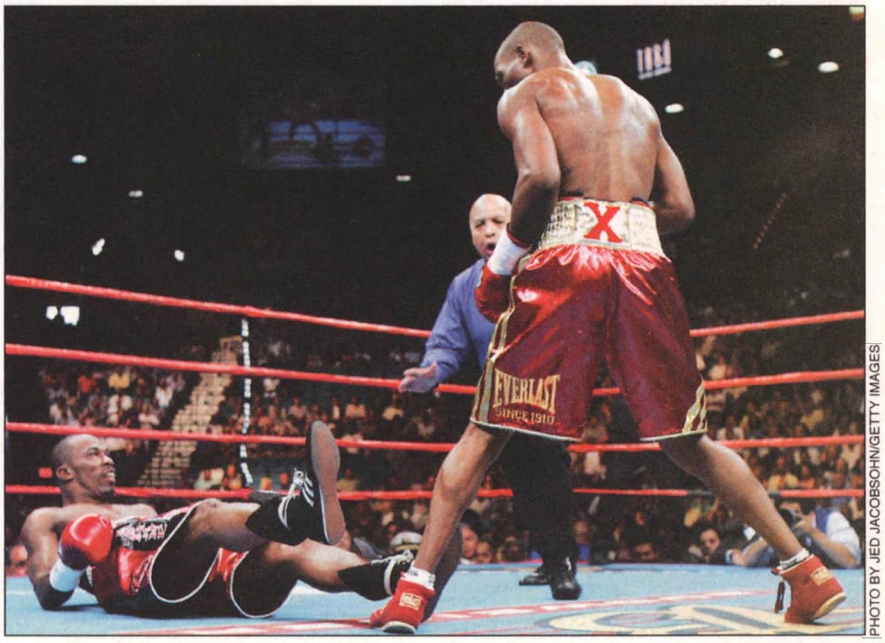


PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

Hopkins was more worried about Oscar winning than he was beating Allen

What If...

James Toney Hadn't Tested Positive After The John Ruiz Fight?

Almost everything about the up-and-down career of James Toney is a giant "what if." What if he'd eaten right between fights? What if he'd trained his hardest every time? What if he hadn't had to struggle so much to make weight for the Roy Jones fight? What if the judges had given Dave Tiberi the decision against him? What if he'd gotten the decision in his first fight with Samuel Peter? What if, what if, what if.

The most intriguing "what if" of all for Toney centers around his April 30, 2005, fight with John Ruiz. Toney showed up at a career-high (at the time) 233 pounds, but his questionable conditioning didn't prevent him from putting on a boxing clinic, scoring a knockdown, and winning a unanimous decision to claim the WBA heavyweight strap. Coupled with his knockout win over Evander Holyfield 18 months earlier, Toney had arrived as a heavyweight force, and there were some who believed he could defeat everyone else out there: Vitali Klitschko, Chris Byrd, Lamon Brewster, etc. He was a hero for having rid fans of the unwatchable Ruiz, and a curiosity because he was making waves in a division in which former middleweights aren't supposed to be able to survive.

It's impossible to say how much steroids helped Toney against Ruiz

And then the urinalysis results came back: positive for steroids. "Lights Out" sure didn't have the classic steroid user's physique, and the Toney camp argued that he'd only used a prescribed steroid to help with his rehabilitation from torn biceps and triceps muscles. But the New York State Athletic Commission's ruling was final: The result was changed to a no-contest, and the alphabet belt was handed back to Ruiz.

According to Toney's people, he just didn't quite have enough time to get the prescribed drugs out of his system. If you buy that story (and another failed drug test in 2007 after a fight with Danny Batchelder certainly increases the sketchiness, but what the hell, let's go with it), then what if the fight had been scheduled for a few weeks later, and Toney had rinsed himself clean of every trace of the steroid? What if it had gone into the

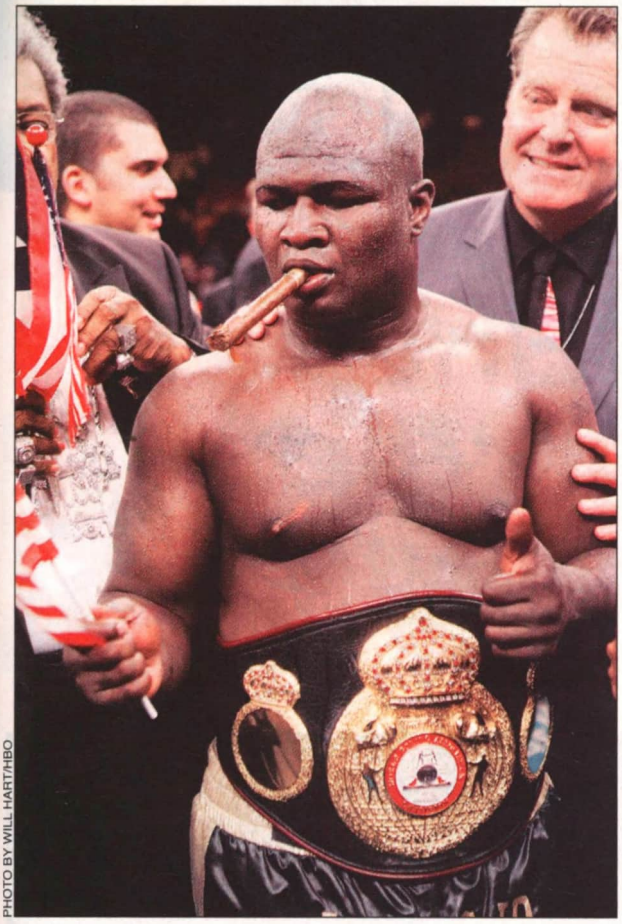


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Toney had to give back the WBA belt, but he did keep the cigar

books as a win for Toney, a loss for Ruiz, and Toney had gotten to keep the belt?

To a large extent, the answers are up to James Toney. Maybe the disappointment of thinking he had a heavyweight title, then finding out he didn't, dampened his enthusiasm for his job enough to account for how grossly out of shape he was for future fights against Hasim Rahman and Peter. Probably not, though. Even if he'd gotten the win over Ruiz and come into his next bout with a title to defend, all the evidence points to Toney undertraining. That's just who he is, especially as a fighter in his late-30s who doesn't have a weight limit to worry about.

So the fact that Toney had eaten his way out of contention less than two years after the Ruiz fight probably would remain the same. The opponents he would have faced, however, those would have changed. Toney would have had a mandatory defense upcoming. Instead of a gimme against Dominick Guinn, he would have been obligated to take on Nicolay Valuev, quite possibly in Germany, where Ruiz lost a controversial decision to 7'2" Russian. That would have been a fascinating matchup, probably interesting enough for HBO to televise it. (Valuev-Ruiz went un-televised in the U.S.) And though he was giving up 14 inches and 100 pounds, we think Toney could have pulled it off. He was still good enough in '05 to outbox an uncoordinated lug like Valuev.

That David-slaying-Goliath scenario would have added to Toney's marketability, meaning his next fight or two could have done big business. The problem is, his clock was ticking, and he would have gotten bumped off soon—if not by Peter or Rahman, then by somebody. The positive drug test may have cost Toney some short-term success, but it didn't impact his career that much in the long-term sense.

The same goes for Ruiz, who lost his belt to Valuev in his next fight anyway. Had Valuev never claimed a belt, then this "what if" scenario certainly would have affected his legacy a good bit, and he wouldn't be the answer to that trivia question about the largest boxing titlist of all-time.

As for the heavyweight division as a whole, again, the impact here is short-term, not long-term. The failed postfight urinalysis, however, epitomizes quite nicely the fans' frustration with Toney's heavyweight journey. The division was wide open from the moment Lennox Lewis retired in early-2004, and Toney could have done a lot to make heavyweight boxing more interesting for us all since that time. But because he didn't take care of his body, and because his most significant heavyweight triumph entered the books as a no-contest, he did little but leave us wishing and wondering. The test came back positive. And that may have been the biggest factor in causing our enduring memories of James Toney as a heavyweight to come back negative.

PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Wouldn't it have been fun to see Toney vs. Valuev

What If...

Tony Weeks Had Just Shoved Diego Corrales' Mouthpiece Back In?

Referee Tony Weeks was just doing his job. When a fighter's mouthpiece pops out and hits the canvas, you call timeout when there's a break in the action and you wash it off. If the fighter spits the mouthpiece out on purpose multiple times, you penalize him one point. Weeks didn't do anything he wasn't supposed to do. But he certainly *could* have improvised and done things differently.

After nine sensational back-and-forth rounds in his lightweight championship fight against Jose Luis Castillo on May 7, 2005, Diego Corrales suddenly found himself in deep trouble early in round 10, on the canvas courtesy of a Castillo left hook. As "Chico" hit the floor, so did his mouthpiece. Weeks called timeout, had Corrales' trainer, Joe Goossen, wash it off, and the action resumed. Castillo pounced immediately and dropped Corrales with another left hand. The gumshield came out again—clearly on purpose this time around—and Weeks called time, indicated to each of the three judges to deduct a point, again asked Goossen to do some quick rinsing, and sent Corrales back into battle. A full 18 seconds passed between when Corrales got up at the count of nine and when the action resumed.

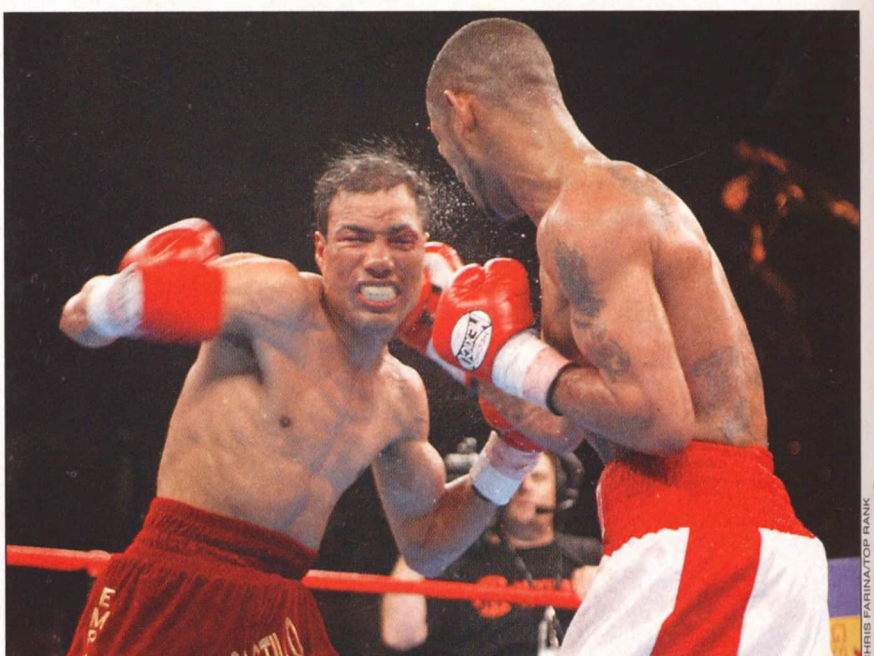


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Corrales tags Castillo with a hook in 2005's Fight of the Year

A lot can happen in 18 seconds, and in this case, a lot of recovery happened. Corrales came out swinging, hurt Castillo, and soon scored an unbelievable stoppage when he had the Mexican defenseless on the ropes. It was a mid-round turnaround for the ages. It clinched round 10 as the Round of the Year, and guaranteed that Corrales-Castillo would not just be Fight of the Year, but a part of the "greatest fight ever" discussion.

But had Weeks said to himself, *I know he's spitting the mouthpiece out on purpose to buy time, I'm just going to stick that thing back in his mouth a little bit dirty so as not to break up the flow of the fight*, the probable scenario is that Castillo would have pounced again, hurt Corrales again, dropped

PHOTO BY NICK LAHAM/GETTY IMAGES

"Chico" enjoys his final victory

him a third time, and, before long, finished him.

Fight fans wouldn't have known what they were missing, of course, but knowing what we do know, those alternate actions from Weeks would have deprived us of so much. Was this a first-rate action fight regardless? Absolutely. But if we get a one-sided 10th round that ends with Castillo's hand raised, then this does not go down as a legendary fight. That comeback from Corrales, packed with extraordinary drama, was what made this a battle that will be talked about for decades to come.

The future of the lightweight division was very directly affected, because we soon learned Castillo couldn't make the 135-pound limit anymore. So if he'd retained the title against Corrales, the lineage would have been broken when he left the division. In that indirect sense, Joel Casamayor benefited from Weeks' decision.

Obviously, Castillo's legacy was damaged by losing the fight and the title—but not that much, since his legacy was also elevated by the exceptional quality of the fight. He did take some punishment in the 10th round that he wouldn't have taken in our alternate scenario, so perhaps it contributed to his current state as a seemingly worn-down fighter. But, win or lose, the fight was good enough to warrant a rematch, so Castillo probably still would have knocked Corrales out in the fourth round five months later and moved up in weight and on with his career.

As for Corrales, even more so than Castillo, he seemed to have left everything in the Mandalay Bay ring that night. He never won another fight, and, of course, the damage was done by the time he spit the mouthpiece out a second time. So either way, Chico was on the road to punching bag status. Maybe with two losses to Castillo instead of a win and a loss, he would have been matched differently, would have faced opponents other than Casamayor and Joshua Clottey. But the general direction in which his fighting abilities and punch resistance were headed wouldn't have been altered.

His life, however? That could be another story. Remember Gwyneth Paltrow and her sliding door? Little changes cause big changes sometimes, and there's every reason to think that in his alternate reality, Corrales wouldn't have been driving his motorcycle drunk, at high speeds, in Las Vegas on May 7, 2007. Maybe that would have been a quiet night in with the kids. Maybe he would have gotten caught driving drunk by a cop two nights earlier and would have been locked in a prison cell on that fateful night. It's impossible to speculate.

But it's also impossible to say for certain that Corrales wouldn't still be alive if he'd lost that fight to Castillo instead of rallying to win it. There's a domino effect to everything that happens in our lives, to the point where spitting out a mouthpiece may actually have impacted the length of Chico's life.

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Fan Brandon Louthan posts a tribute to Corrales at crash site

What If...

Steve Smoger Had Called In Sick For Pavlik-Taylor?

In the 23 years that Steve Smoger has been refereeing professional prizefights, the New Jersey-based official has developed something of a reputation for letting fights go on until there's no question that they need to be stopped. Looking over the hundreds of bouts he's worked, it's hard to find a single one that he halted earlier than any other referee might have. That doesn't mean Smoger is reckless or puts fighters' lives in greater danger than other refs do; most observers would agree he's one of the finest third men in the world. He simply believes in letting fights reach their natural conclusion.

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

A dazed Pavlik stumbles away from Taylor

Smoger, who had let Kelly Pavlik dish out a thorough beating against Edison Miranda in May '07, got the call for Pavlik's first title shot against middleweight champ Jermain Taylor four months later. It was fair to assume, especially in a bout of this magnitude, that if either fighter found himself in trouble but could still defend himself semi-adequately, "Double S" was going to let the fight go.

Well, Pavlik found himself in quite a bit of trouble midway through the second round. After foolishly dropping his hands, "The Ghost" got tagged and went down. He got up on very unsteady legs, took several more flush powershots from Taylor, and staggered sideways across the ring, just barely regaining his balance and avoiding a second knockdown. It was a "there's no way this guy's making it out of the round" moment. Many refs would have halted the bout right there, thinking that Pavlik was a violent knockout victim waiting to happen.

Little did we all know that it would be Taylor who would eventually suffer a violent knockout.

Pavlik recovered, battled back, and kayoed Taylor in the seventh round. Smoger gave Pavlik every opportunity to win the fight, and the challenger took advantage.

But what if Smoger had woken up the morning of the fight with a 103-degree fever, unable to drag himself out of bed? What if another ref—a less liberal ref—had gotten the assignment, and had stopped the fight in round two with Pavlik looking like a beaten man?

Needless to say, that would have been devastating to Pavlik. He would have come off as the middleweight Michael Grant if his title shot had ended in a second-round kayo defeat. He would have looked like a chinless hype job that crumbled when it really

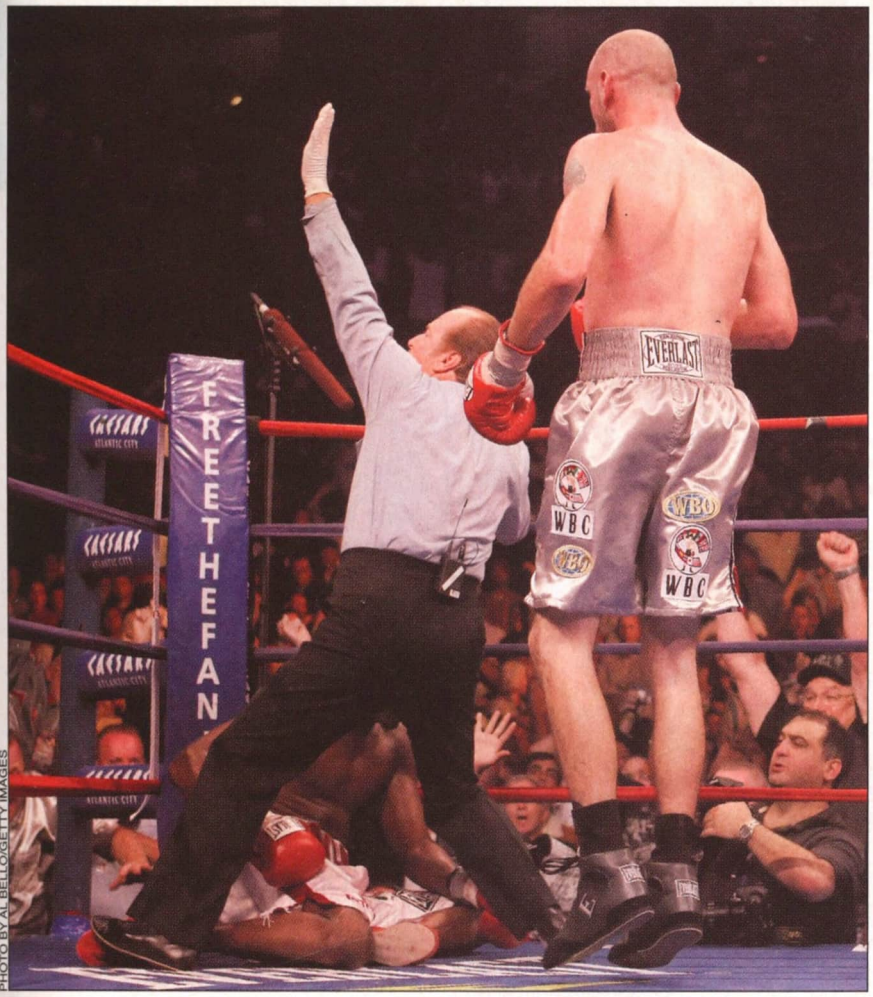


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Smoger rescues the fallen Taylor in the seventh round

mattered. Instead of becoming an instant star, a Fighter of the Year candidate, and perhaps the most bankable white American fighter since fellow Youngstowner Ray Mancini, Pavlik would have become a punchline. And it would have been a long road back to respectability.

Obviously, there would have been no Pavlik-Taylor II. Instead, we'd probably be getting psyched right now for a huge Joe Calzaghe-Taylor showdown. It would make a lot of sense, with Taylor hotter than ever coming off a second-round blowout of the supposedly awesome Pavlik. It would be a very marketable battle of unbeatens, and a much more entertaining fight on paper than Calzaghe vs. Bernard Hopkins. Taylor needed to move up from middleweight anyway, so why not do a champion vs. champion fight against Calzaghe?

In the larger picture, there would be two negatives to a "Taylor KO 2 Pavlik" result. First, with Taylor having announced his move up in weight before the fight, we'd now have a vacant middleweight title. The top-rated contenders would be Arthur Abraham and Winky Wright, and that wouldn't be an overly marketable matchup, so we might be looking at a lengthy vacancy atop one of boxing's glamour divisions. It's not the worst development in the world, but it's certainly a downgrade from having a clear, undisputed champ who's part of a meaningful lineage.

More importantly, though, boxing's magnificent comeback year in 2007 would have been diminished. The megabucks fight between Floyd Mayweather and Oscar De La Hoya was hugely important, and quality matches like Miguel Cotto-Shane Mosley and Calzaghe-Mikkel Kessler were key, but Pavlik-Taylor topped them all in terms of action and drama. It was the one fight with mainstream appeal that turned out to be a Fight of the Year contender. And had Pavlik seen a ref's waving arms in the second round, it would have instead come across as a dud. As in Mayweather-De La Hoya, boxing would have failed to deliver the goods. And you'd better believe the anti-boxing faction of the mainstream press would have jumped on that opportunity to rip on the sport.

It's still early in the post-Pavlik-Taylor-I era, so the long-term repercussions of the fight, and of an alternate ending to the fight, remain uncertain. But even after just a few months, we can see how a different referee might have affected Taylor's future, Pavlik's future, and the perceived health of the game.

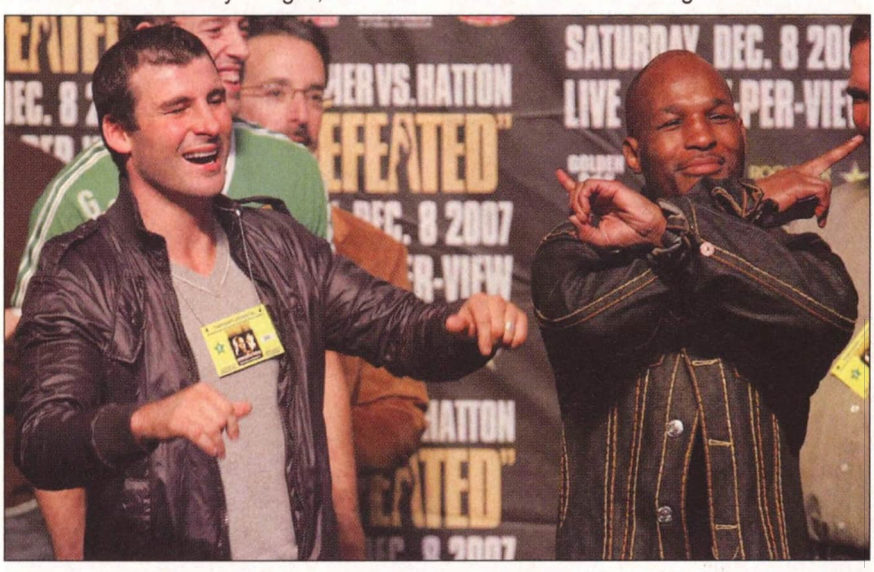


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Rather than Calzaghe-Hopkins, we might be gearing up for Calzaghe-Taylor if Smoger hadn't worked the Pavlik fight

What If...

Floyd Mayweather Goes Ahead And Tries MMA?

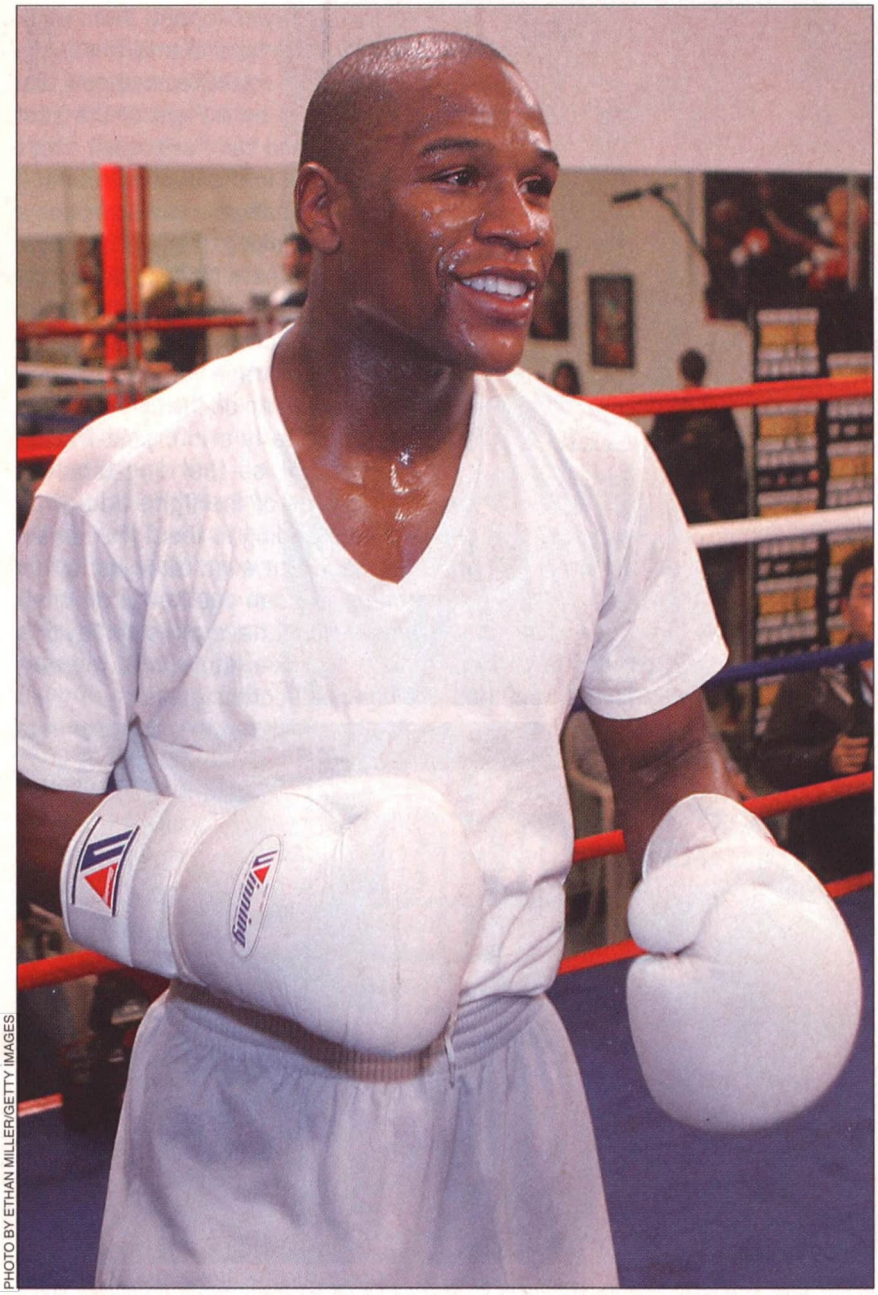


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Mayweather is always looking for new challenges

As our friends at Monty Python like to say, "And now for something completely different": We're straying from the theme of the article for this final scenario, as rather than alter something that has already happened, we're speculating about something that *may* happen in the future.

Within days of his win over Ricky Hatton in December '07, pound-for-pound king Floyd Mayweather went public with his interest in participating in a mixed martial arts fight. The news was greeted with almost universal cynicism because "Pretty Boy" generally manages his career in a low-risk, high-reward style, because the switch from boxing to MMA is not a simple one, and because Mayweather has become a master of self-hype. But at the same time, Mayweather has made it clear over the past year or two that he's growing bored with boxing. Maybe, just maybe, he really is itching for a new challenge.

Realistically, it isn't going to happen in 2008. The welterweight champ is penciled in for a September rematch with Oscar De La Hoya that will pay Mayweather somewhere in the neighborhood of $99-zillion. Unless De La Hoya blows that fight by losing his May tuneup, the rematch to the most financially successful fight of all-time is happening, and Pretty Boy isn't going to think about entering the Octagon until it's over.

But perhaps, in 2009, PBF will jump to MMA, leaving all those cynics asking, "WTF?"

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Does "Pretty Boy" really want to get involved in this kind of fighting?

If he does, there are some obvious potential negatives for boxing. For starters, Mayweather is long overdue for a defense of the linear welterweight championship against a *real* 147-pound contender. It looks like Miguel Cotto (if he beats Alfonso Gomez on April 12) will be facing Antonio Margarito (if he beats Kermit Cintron on April 12), and the winner—especially if it's Cotto—will have an overwhelming argument that Mayweather must fight him if he wants to retain any level of respect in the boxing community. Not to mention, Carlos Quintana and Shane Mosley are both highly deserving contenders at welterweight. If Mayweather doesn't fight one (or all) of these men in '08 or '09, he will be doing boxing a major disservice.

The logical question, of course, is how long would the MMA experiment last? If it's for one fight, and then Mayweather's going right back to boxing, having used the MMA contest to gain additional hype for a Cotto/Margarito/Quintana/Mosley fight, then it doesn't damage boxing. Frankly, even though the MMA move would have some circus sideshow qualities to it, it would, under those circumstances, probably help boxing.

But say Mayweather moves to MMA and stays there. Sure, the top contenders at welterweight could fight each other to fill the vacancy. But it's not the same as keeping the linear title intact. And it's not the same as having a marquee matchup like Mayweather-Cotto to get the sports world buzzing.

And then there's this negative scenario for boxing: Say Mayweather tries MMA and gets his ass kicked. It's certainly not unrealistic; if any opponent with grappling skills gets Pretty Boy on the ground, Mayweather's going to be using those blazing-fast hands of his to tap out with record quickness. (And if he doesn't tap out quickly enough, serious injury—injury that puts his entire athletic future in jeopardy—is a distinct possibility.) A lot of MMA fans have opined that Mayweather would be a huge underdog against even the worst MMA trialhorse, and that his only hope is to match up against a fellow "striker," someone who throws punches but has no other discernible skills.

Undoubtedly, Mayweather is a great athlete, and he may be able to develop some on-the-mat skills quickly. But it's fair to say that for him to win his MMA debut, great care will have to go into the matchmaking process. And if Mayweather—boxing's supposed best fighter—gets crushed by some mediocre MMA combatant, then the MMA-loving crowd will use it as ammunition in their argument for why their fighters are better than ours. Of course, we all know that's silly because Floyd will have lost under *their* rules. But it would tarnish boxing in the eyes of many ignorant observers just the same.

And it would tarnish Mayweather's legacy to a degree. So much of the empire he's built is based upon that zero at the end of his record. Even though he'd still have that zero as a boxer, as a *fighter*, he'd no longer be perfect. To someone like Mayweather, that should matter a lot.

We think we speak for most boxing fans when we say these four words: Don't do it, Floyd. The potential minuses for boxing far outweigh the potential plusses.

But on the flipside, there are a lot of fans who've been dreaming for years of watching Mayweather get humbled and pounded on. For them, a jump to MMA probably gives them their best chance of having that dream come true. ■

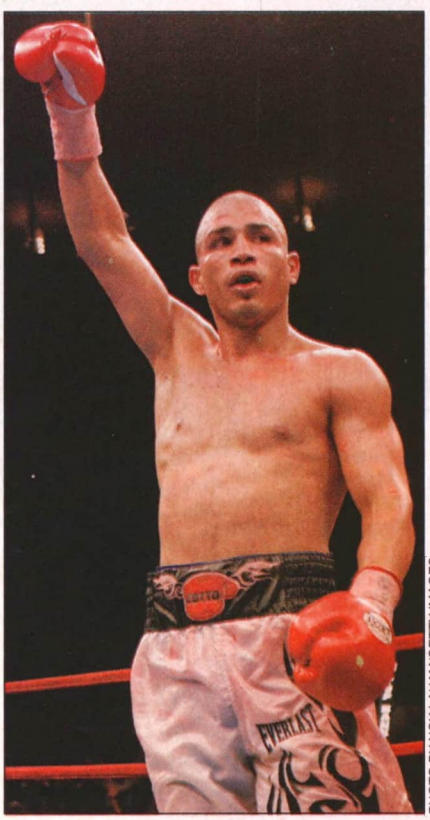
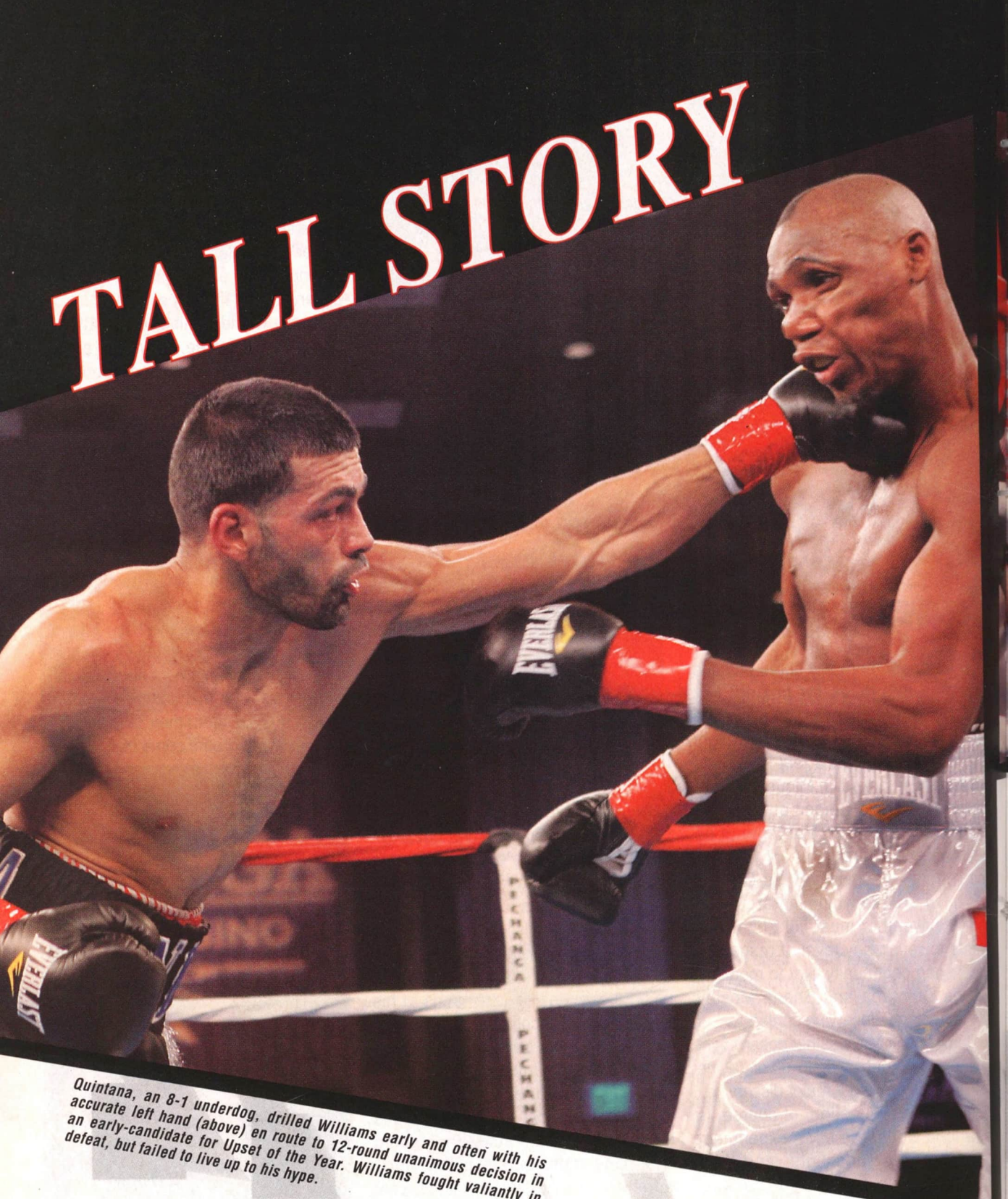


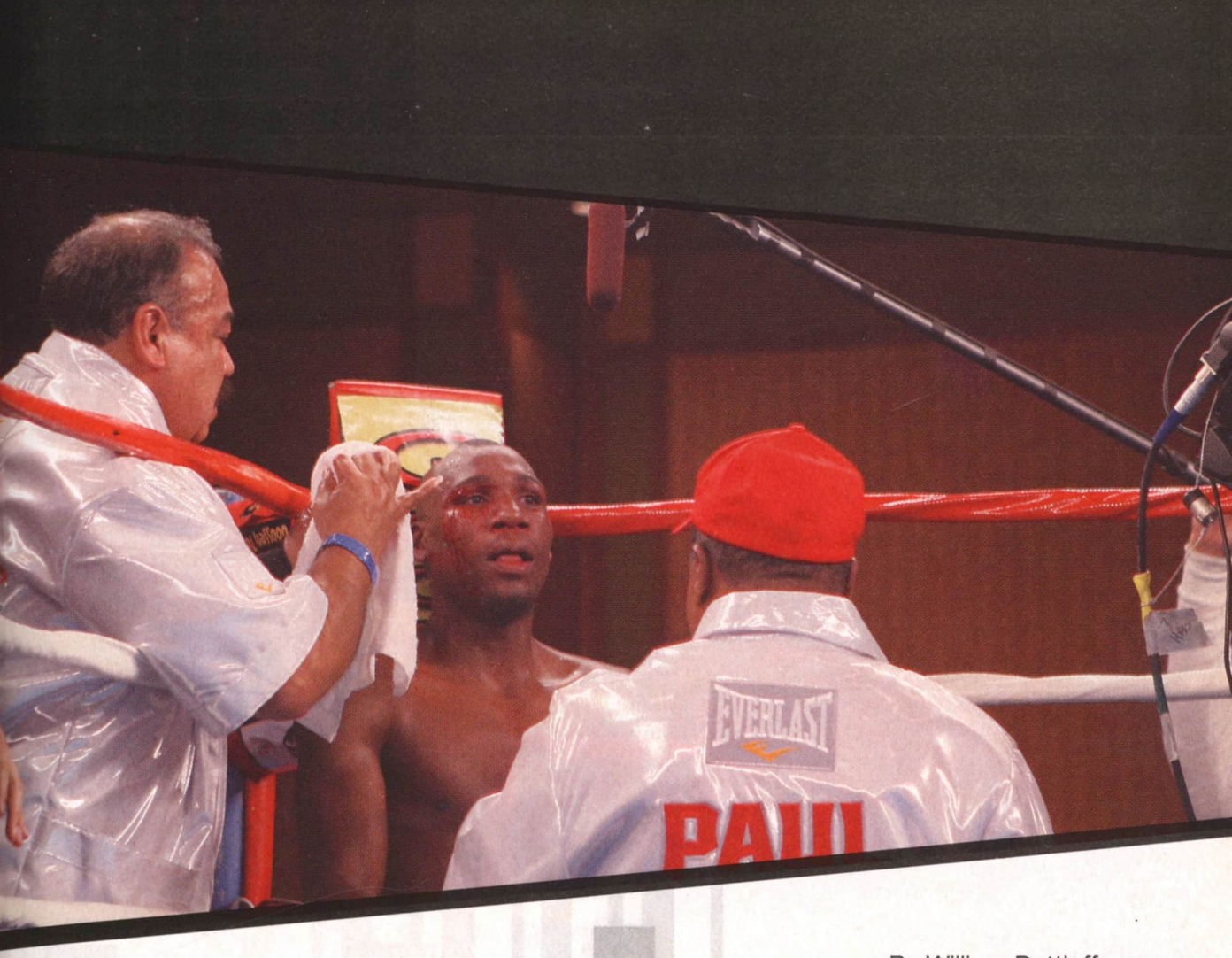
PHOTO BY NICK LAHAM/GETTY IMAGES

A Cotto fight would enhance Mayweather's legacy much more than switching to MMA

TALL STORY



Quintana, an 8-1 underdog, drilled Williams early and often with his accurate left hand (above) en route to 12-round unanimous decision in an early-candidate for Upset of the Year. Williams fought valiantly in defeat, but failed to live up to his hype.



Paul Williams Can't Measure Up To The Billing "World's Most Feared" Fighter

By William Dettloff

PHOTOS BY JAN SANDERS

Really, you couldn't blame them. All those message boarders and forum jockeys huddled over their keyboards and sweating over new and creative ways to praise Paul Williams, could be neither blamed nor held responsible for their enthusiasm. They had seen in Williams a young, towering, American, relatively charismatic, and potentially dominant prizefighter for their generation.

The ones before had had Mike Tyson and their fathers Ray Leonard and before him Muhammad Ali, and on back it went, so why shouldn't they get a Paul Williams at least? It wasn't asking too much.

Much to the surprise of most, Quintana immediately asserted his authority in the very first round, rocking Williams with a series of flush left hands to the head. Quintana and his trainer had studied tapes of Williams and devised a near-perfect battle plan.

Every generation wants and deserves a truly dominant fighter that the really smart, perceptive ones latch on to early, before he even wins a title, the way so many did with Williams. He was their guy: the fighter of the FaceBook generation. He was on his way. That they recognized his genius early, before anyone else did, meant that his victories would be theirs, and his greatness too.

That was before Williams' surprising points loss to Carlos Quintana at the Pechanga Resort & Casino in Temecula, California, on February 9. Suddenly, all the things that had made him a surefire star—his smile, his disconcertingly elongated body, his wingspan, his punch rate, Al Hayman—were largely useless against a guy in Quintana who wasn't rated among THE RING's top 10 welterweights (but is now at number three). It's true that Williams, 33-1 (24), wasn't blown out, that it was a competitive and mostly entertaining fight that seemed within Williams' monstrous grasp right up until the very last bell.

Indeed, the judges' scores of 115-113 and 116-112 (twice) were perfectly reflective of the relative tightness of the contest (The RING scored it 115-113 for Quintana), and of the way Williams refused to let go of the hope of winning it, even after the momentum he built over a middle-rounds surge evaporated late. Surely there is no shame in losing a prizefight the way this one was lost, and to a smart guy like Quintana, whose only defeat came against Miguel Cotto, who is inarguably no worse than the second-best 147-pound fighter in the world.

But this wasn't just one pug outfighting another. Williams was fast becoming the Paul Bunyon of welterweights, a monster of such size and potential and ferocity that when he was promoted relentlessly as "the most avoided fighter in boxing," it was hard to resist the pull. Lovers of irony will note that the same title was once hung on Antonio Margarito, whose pleas for a fight against champ Floyd Mayweather were so casually and repeatedly rebuffed that there seemed there had to be some truth in the claim. Williams rendered it nonsense when he signed to fight Margarito, and then beat him by decision last July. It wasn't enough that he took Margarito's long winning streak and the baubles associated with the attendant sanctioning body; he assumed his "most avoided" title too. We're surprised there's not a belt to go along with it.

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At any rate, two more events aided the positioning of Williams as a fighter to be feared. The first was Mayweather's pronouncement following his win over Ricky Hatton that he had no interest in facing Williams (or Cotto or Margarito either for that matter, but let's not muddy the waters with that). If Mayweather wasn't going to face him, then it had to be because he knew Williams' style would trouble him—the same way, many strained to compare, that Thomas Hearns' style had troubled Ray Leonard. The second was the falling through of Williams' fight against Kermit Cintron, which was preceded by Cintron's surprisingly difficult win over the dangerously hardheaded journeyman Jesse Feliciano in November.

The hard time Cintron had with Feliciano, coupled with the tendon damage he suffered concurrently (and which likely caused a good amount of the difficulty in the first place) conspired to explode the Williams-Cintron match, while at the same time resulting in a Cintron-Margarito rematch. Thus a Perfect Storm of circumstances was created that abetted the belief that Williams was feared and, as important, that he was certainly and clearly worthy of being feared. That is, by everyone but Quintana.

"When we received the offer to fight Paul Williams, it was good news because we knew Carlos knows how to fight southpaws," Jose Bonilla, Quintana's trainer, told THE RING. "When he was an amateur, he grew up in Puerto Rico sparring good southpaws like Anibal Acevedo, who won the bronze medal in the Olympic Games in Barcelona. We saw Williams against two other southpaws, Sharmba Mitchell and Terrance Cauthen. We studied his style and knew Carlos would do well."

That he did. Quintana, 25-1 (19), strode to the center of the ring at the opening bell and launched a left hand that thudded into Williams' jaw so cleanly and with such ease it was a wonder Williams didn't drop just from the shock of it. The southpaw Quintana, an 8-1 underdog, scored repeatedly throughout the early rounds with quick counter left hands for which Williams, who appeared plodding and slow in comparison, had no answer. It wasn't until the fifth and sixth rounds that he was able to apply significant pressure to slow down Quintana's bursts. He did well throughout the middle rounds, when Quintana appeared to lose focus, or tire. Bonilla wasn't worried.

"We knew he would be tough," he said. "He's a tough guy and the rhythm and the pace of the fight was very fast. In the middle rounds they both might have gotten a little tired. But we had perfect preparation. I knew Carlos

Williams never stopped trying and rallied in the middle rounds to close the gap, but Quintana absorbed his best efforts and regained control in the later round of a fight that was as revealing as it was entertaining.

Meet The *Real* Carlos Quintana

If Carlos Quintana wasn't unknown going into his fight with Paul Williams, he was under-exposed. If hardcore fans knew of the 31-year-old at all, it was from two fights: his upset of heavily hyped prospect Joel Julio in June 2006, in which he thoroughly outboxed a fighter many in the business were touting as the next Felix Trinidad, and his stoppage loss, six months later, to Miguel Cotto. According to trainer Jose Bonilla, it is the former performance to which we should pay attention.

"Cotto is a good, strong fighter with a strong left hand," Bonilla said. "We've never made excuses about that fight, but six weeks before the fight Carlos suffered a rib injury and couldn't do anything for two weeks—no running, no sparring, no gym work. We never talked about it because we didn't want people to think we were making excuses, and Carlos never wanted to bring it up. We should have canceled the fight, but we didn't want to lose the opportunity. Anyone who saw Carlos against Julio and now against Williams knows that wasn't the real Carlos Quintana against Cotto."

Quintana enjoys his biggest win to date

Quintana, who lives with his wife and three children in Moca, Puerto Rico, started boxing at 15 years old and compiled an amateur record of 62-8 (48) on the way to representing Puerto Rico on the 1996 Olympic team. His win over Julio marked his first victory over a better-known, respected opponent. Williams was his second and, according to Bonilla, it was as much the result of smarts as anything.

"Williams is a real talent," he told THE RING. "But I can't tell you how many nights we spent watching his fights. We found that in the middle range he is a great fighter. And he has a great reach, but he's not a great fighter at long range—or at close range. We knew we just couldn't stay at the middle range—we could stay at long range or short range and move away from his left and we would do well."

At press time there was talk about Quintana facing Shane Mosley next, one of the biggest names in the sport. Dan Goossen, Williams' promoter, said he would prefer to invoke the rematch clause, which allows for Quintana to take an interim match first. Goossen said he wanted to work with Quintana's promoters, Lou DiBella and Northeast Promotions, toward an immediate rematch instead. Whichever way it goes, one suspects the welterweight division, already one of the deepest and possibly the best in the sport, just got a little deeper. And also that Quintana's days of being under-exposed are well over.

—W.D.

would have his legs for all 12 rounds and that he would be strong."

He was right. Quintana gained a second wind over the late rounds and again made Williams appear clumsy, slow, and not at all "The Punisher" that had strutted into the ring almost an hour before beaming, one imagines, at the thought of how easy it all might be. By the end, it seemed as clear as it ever has been about anyone that Williams had been overrated from the start, that good marketing and matchmaking and good connections and exposure all had conspired to fool us again. What other explanation could there be? Williams had run up an impressive record against the usual flotsam and, in his only significant fight, was fading down the stretch against Margarito and barely held on for the decision win. Is that the mark of a great fighter—even one that has the potential to be great?

"No, he wasn't overrated at all," said Eddie Mustafa Muhammad, former light heavyweight champion and currently the trainer of 175-pound beltholder Chad Dawson. "He beat Margarito. But his strength is being taken away at that weight. He has to move up to junior middleweight, at least. He's filling out and he can't keep making that weight. He didn't have it that night. I think he's a much better fighter than he showed against Quintana, but not at 147 pounds. He's just too big."

Indeed, Williams, who stands a purported 6'1," re-hydrated after the weigh-in all the way up to 164 pounds to Quintana's 158, according to HBO's scales. Certainly he has the frame to fight all the way up to cruiserweight if he hangs around long enough, as did the fighter to which he is most commonly (and erroneously) compared: Hearns.

"When you have to make that weight, like he does, your body just shuts down," said Mustafa Muhammad. "He kept getting hit with the same punch over and over. He's got a ton of heart, but when Mother Nature says it's time, you have to move up. When your body wants to grow, there's nothing you can do about it. He's a great fighter and he's going to be an even better fighter—but not at 147."

Williams' promoter, Dan Goossen, told THE RING that Williams intends

to stay at 147 pounds, and also disagreed with the premise that his fighter had been exposed as an overrated product of smart hype. That's to be expected. He did, however, draw an interesting analogy that a reasoned mind considers.

"I don't believe Paul was overrated," he said. "It's like saying that the New England Patriots were overrated going into the Super Bowl and the New York Giants, from top to bottom, were a better team. Everyone knows that's not true; on that particular *day* they were. The New England Patriots were a better team. Nobody expected the Giants to perform the way they did. And we got the same kind of performance out of Quintana—a performance no one expected.

"It's one of the exciting things about our business that you don't find in other businesses: A baseball team can lose 30 or 40 games and still get to the World Series. In basketball, a team can lose games and still get to the NBA championship. And if you lose at that level no one says you were never a good team. In our sport, you get to that Super Bowl-like event and if you don't perform the way you have in the past, your record and everything you've accomplished goes out the window."

As is clearly illustrated by this photograph, Quintana had no problem getting inside against the much-taller Williams. Overall, Quintana's performance was an excellent example of how timing and savvy boxing can offset physical advantages.

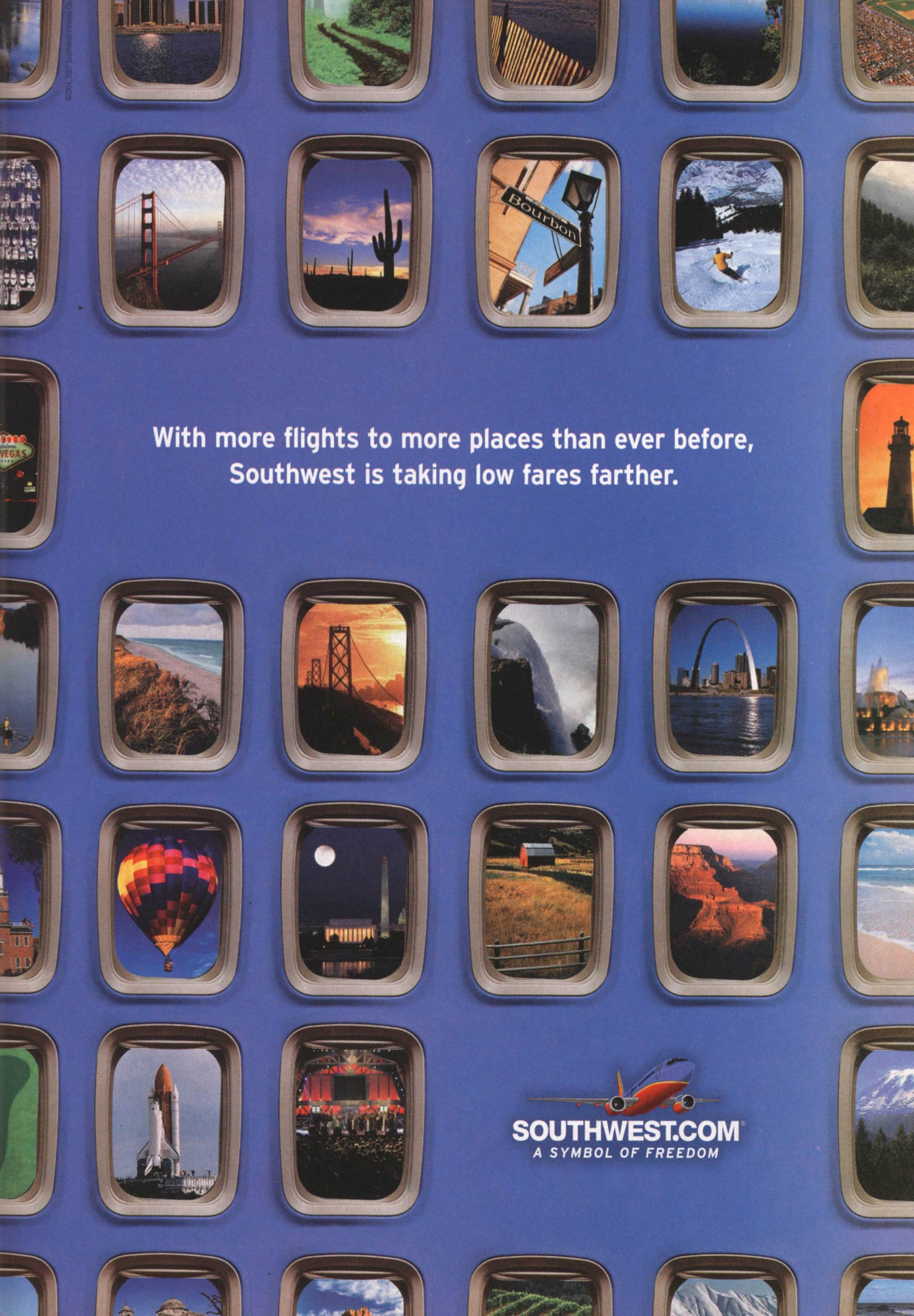
There was a time, Goossen would like to remind us, when it wasn't such a terrible thing if a fighter lost, that it wasn't necessarily a reflection of his promise if he occasionally had a bad night and dropped one he was expected to win. Fighters get overrated, sure. But there are few undefeated records in history, even in the pantheon. Maybe Williams isn't the monster he was purported to be. Does that mean he's not still a good prospect? Not necessarily.

"You can have the most feared fighter in the world and if he has a night where he doesn't perform, for whatever reason, the way he has in the past, it doesn't diminish the fact that he's one of the best welterweights in the world," Goossen said.

"Do we feel he's not a top-of-the-line welterweight? No. It was just a horrible day for all of us and a great day for Quintana. But until you have that kind of performance, you don't know if you can come back from it and improve. A loss to a good fighter can make you a better fighter in the long run."

The schools are divergent on Williams. The message boarders and hero-worshipers are no doubt licking their wounds, arguing the judges' decision, or creating all manner of alibis that explain away Williams' loss and seek to restore him to his prior lofty position. You can't blame them; it hurts when your hero turns out to be human. The other school will point to Williams' failure in this, only his second big fight, as proof that athletes of real quality are rarely seen, that connections are no substitute for hard lessons, and that when something sounds too good to be true it most assuredly is.

The truth likely is, he is neither the giant he was marketed to be, nor the outright fraud his detractors see. He is neither the best fighter in the world nor the worst. He resides probably somewhere in the middle, which, all things considered, isn't the worst place to be. ■



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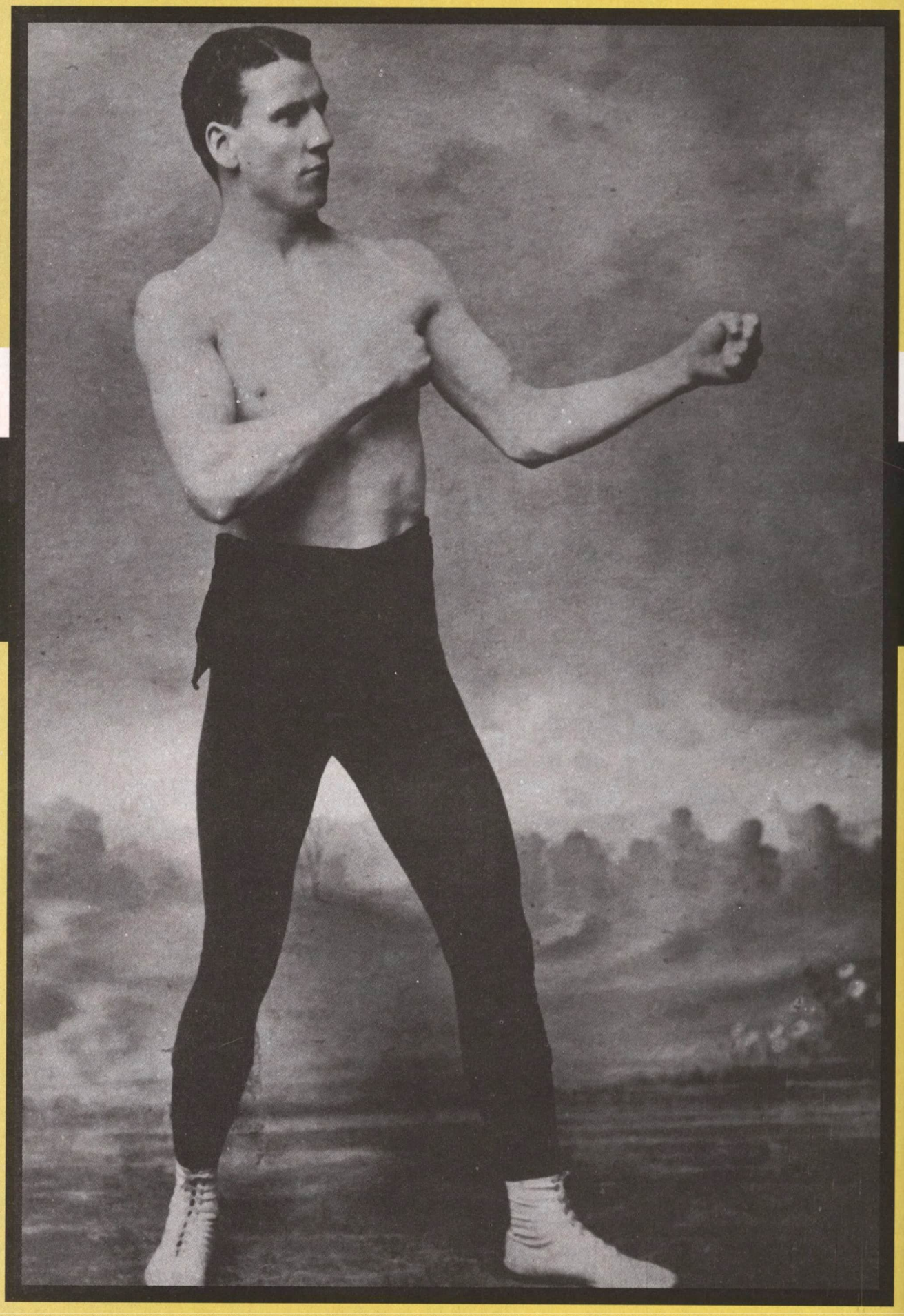


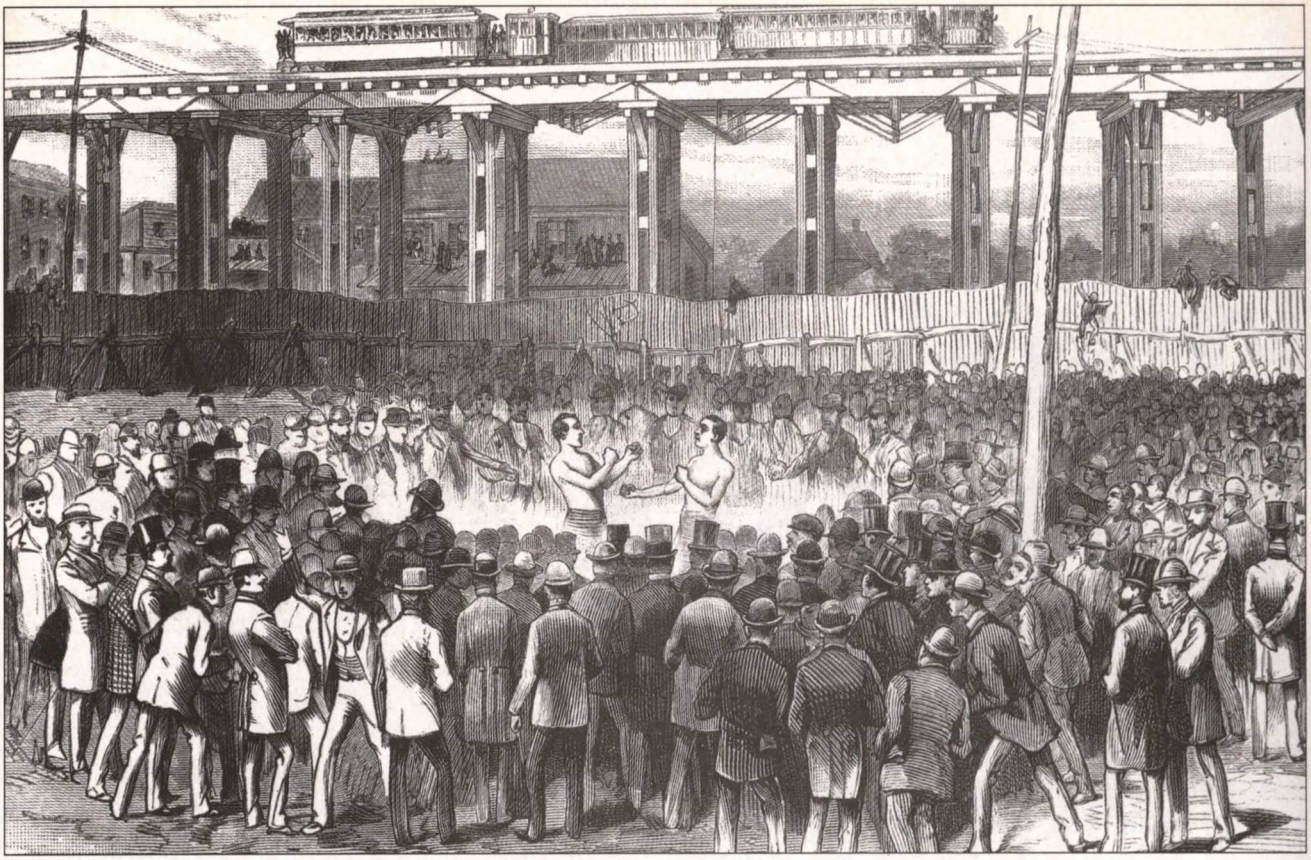
THE NONPAREIL

The Jack Dempsey That Even Jack Dempsey Admired

By Don Stradley

During the autumn months of 1895, in a neat little cottage in the Pacific Northwest, perhaps the greatest middleweight our country had ever known—a man who didn't care for publicity, an unpredictable man, a married father of two little girls—slept fitfully in a bedroom darkened by heavy curtains, the air thick with the fragrance of roses. Jack Dempsey, "The Nonpareil," was dying.

He was in the final stages of consumption, the same disease that had killed his father at 34. During his last train trip, the other passengers had kept their distance. He didn't blame them. His eyes were red and swollen, and his body had wasted down to a shadow. When the train reached Portland, Oregon, Dempsey had to be carried off.



Dempsey was an attraction even before he won the middleweight title. His 1883 bare-knuckle bout with Harry Force attracted quite a crowd at Coney Island and was considered important enough for the periodicals of the day to cover. The fight was broken up by the police in the 11th round.

The country air was supposed to help, but his voice was so mottled from his illness that he could barely talk. He refused visitors, especially reporters who wanted to talk about boxing. Sometimes he was his old self, playing with his daughters or making plans for a fishing trip. Sometimes he would summon the strength to sit up and stare out the window at snowcapped Mount Hood, but the glare of the sun made his head hurt. Usually he just slept, hoping the bat-winged phantoms in his mind would be gone when he awakened.

During his lucid moments, Dempsey thought of Bob Fitzsimmons. Four years earlier in a New Orleans ring surrounded by barbed wire, Fitzsimmons had taken the middleweight championship from him, and had done so with great violence. Now, he wondered if Fitzsimmons' hammering fists had somehow brought on his condition. This, of course, was nonsense. He had shown signs of his illness long before he fought Fitzsimmons.

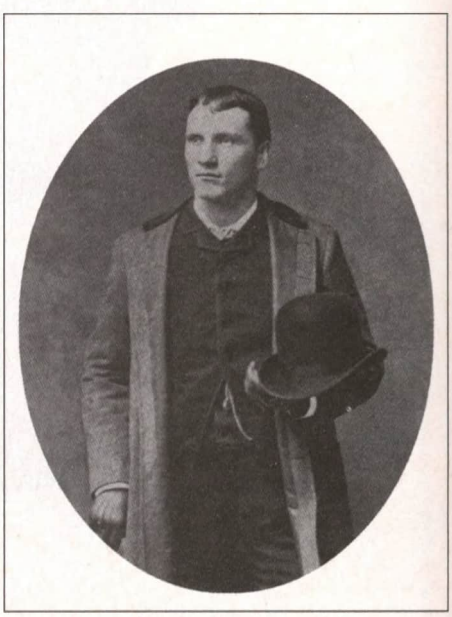
While Dempsey ranted, his wife handled the press, saying that her husband was fine. What she didn't say was that Dempsey woke up most mornings and didn't recognize her. She remained optimistic, though, keeping his room supplied with roses. In a few years the consumption would kill her too.

The sad condition of Dempsey's final resting place—a shabby grave with a cardboard marker—inspired a poem by an admirer that ended with the lines:

Tis strange New York should
thus forget
Its "bravest of the brave,"
And in the fields of Oregon,
Unmarked, leave Dempsey's grave

The other Jack Dempsey, the one who would set alight the 1920s, told author Roger Kahn, "Everybody used to know that poem. We used to recite it. We knew it by heart. So did a lot of people in those days. When we were kids around the Colorado mining camps, all of us wanted to be the new Jack Dempsey, the new Nonpareil. When it turned out I could fight the best, I got the name."

How fitting it was that a poem kept the original Dempsey's memory alive, because if ever a man displayed poetry in the ring, it was The Nonpareil.



Dempsey as he looked shortly after winning the middleweight title, dressed in the manner befitting a world champion in the 1880s.

***

He was born John Kelly in Curran, Ireland, on December 15, 1862, but relocated to Brooklyn as a boy. Skilled at both wrestling and boxing, he worked with his half-brother, Martin Dempsey, as "The Wrestling Dempseys." John, a.k.a. Jack, kept the Dempsey name when he quit his job at a barrel-making shop and began prizefighting. If John L. Sullivan's bouts took on the atmosphere of biblical epics, Dempsey's were tightly wound dramas with unexpected twists. His admirers soon dubbed him The Nonpareil, meaning "without equal."

Depending on the source, Dempsey's record varies. He fought under both Queensberry and old London rules, sometimes in bare fists and sometimes in buckskin gloves. Some of his exhibitions were so memorable that they were recorded as official bouts. Many of his early fights were interrupted by the police. A rough estimate has Dempsey at 50-3-10 (15), with 7 no-decisions.

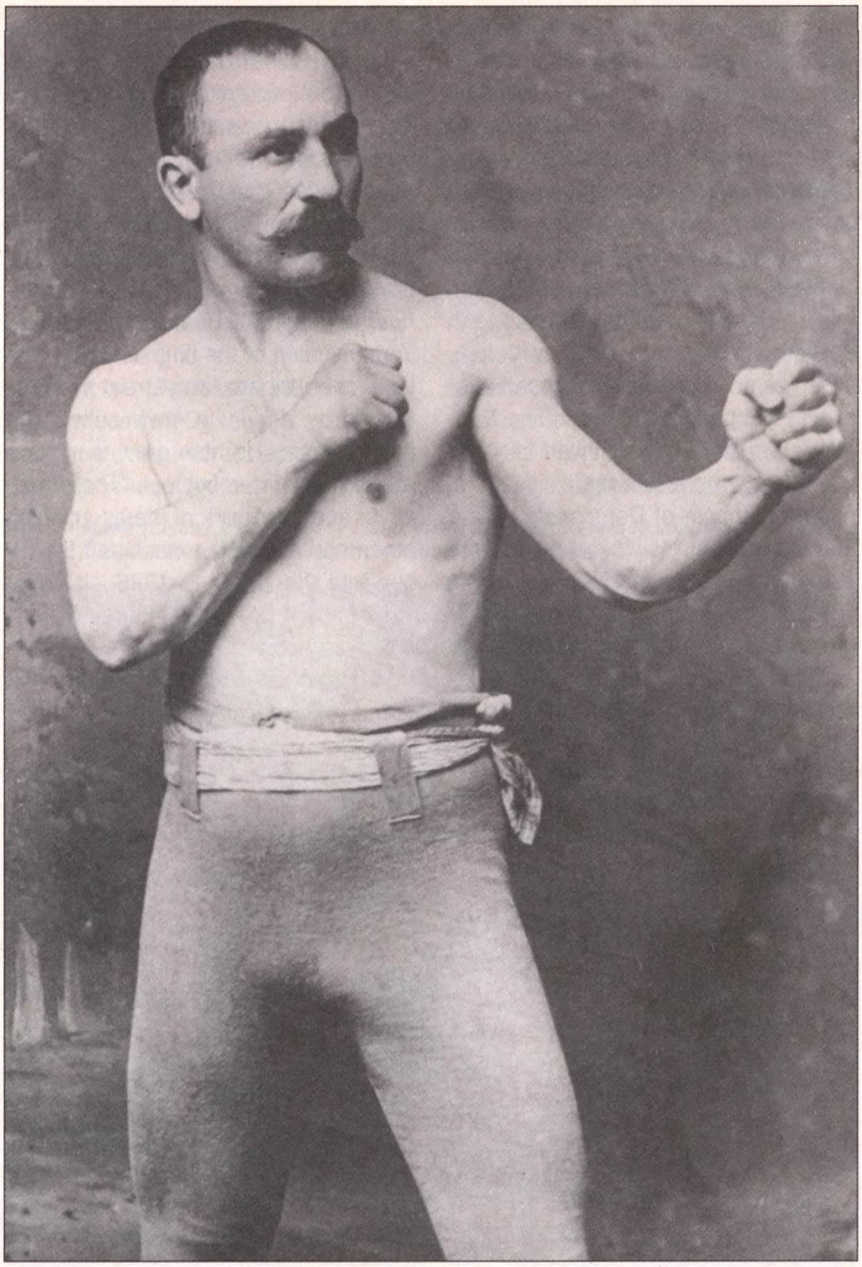
At 5'8" and rarely weighing more than 145 pounds, the wraithlike Dempsey whipped some of the toughest pugs of the era, including Jack Fogerty, Billy McCarthy, George LaBlanche, and Dominick McCaffrey. His 1891 bout with Fitzsimmons was, at the time, the richest prizefight in history. Long before the term was coined, The Nonpareil was probably the era's greatest fighter, "pound-for-pound."

Referee Charlie White recalled, "At first glance, Dempsey looked like someone who was sick. His physique was not striking, and his hands looked almost like a woman's." Yet Dempsey "possessed one of the finest fighting brains and could figure out a battle better than any other man of his time."

Dempsey won recognition as the middleweight champion of America after beating George Fulljames in 1884, although Dempsey often referred to himself as the "lightweight champion." For the next seven years, whether he was fighting outdoors in a snowstorm or in the most elegant theater on Broadway, he was virtually untouchable.

Like Sullivan, Dempsey brought boxing to a wider audience. His 1884 battle with England's Tom Henry at the Eighth Street Theater was attended by wealthy New York swells and women in gorgeous evening attire who sat in the box seats, while the ground level was made up of beetle-browed toughs. Dempsey was a marvel that night, winning a six-round decision. At one point, Dempsey knocked Henry into the footlights, and only the quick reflexes of the man on bass viol kept Henry from crashing into the orchestra pit.

Richard K. Fox, editor of the *Police Gazette*, wrote of Dempsey: "His style and method of boxing has neatness about it ... He stops blows aimed at him by his adversaries with so much skill, and hits his antagonist with such terrific force and comparative ease, that he astonishes and terrifies his opponents beyond measure." The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* described Dempsey's domination of McCaffrey this way: "He danced, walked, ran, and skipped about the Pittsburgh man till the latter got the idea that there were half-a-dozen Dempseys surrounding him ..." Once, after Dempsey had beaten three men in one night, *The New York Times* wrote, "The old sports admitted that if he were a little bigger he would prove a dangerous opponent for the invincible Sullivan."



Dempsey was at the peak of his powers when he knocked out George LaBlanche (pictured) in 1886. Sore loser LaBlanche was so miffed afterward, he butted Dempsey in the mouth when the winner offered him $300 as a consolation prize.

Although often discussed, a Sullivan-Dempsey bout never took place. Dempsey once challenged Sullivan under the condition that John L would have to stop him within six rounds, otherwise Dempsey would keep the purse. Sullivan scoffed at the idea, and threatened to break Dempsey's jaw if they ever met. Dempsey also borrowed Sullivan's gimmick, where he challenged anyone in a theater to last four rounds with him. When some poor fellow collapsed after one of Dempsey's punches, The Nonpareil turned pale and vowed to never take on any more civilians.

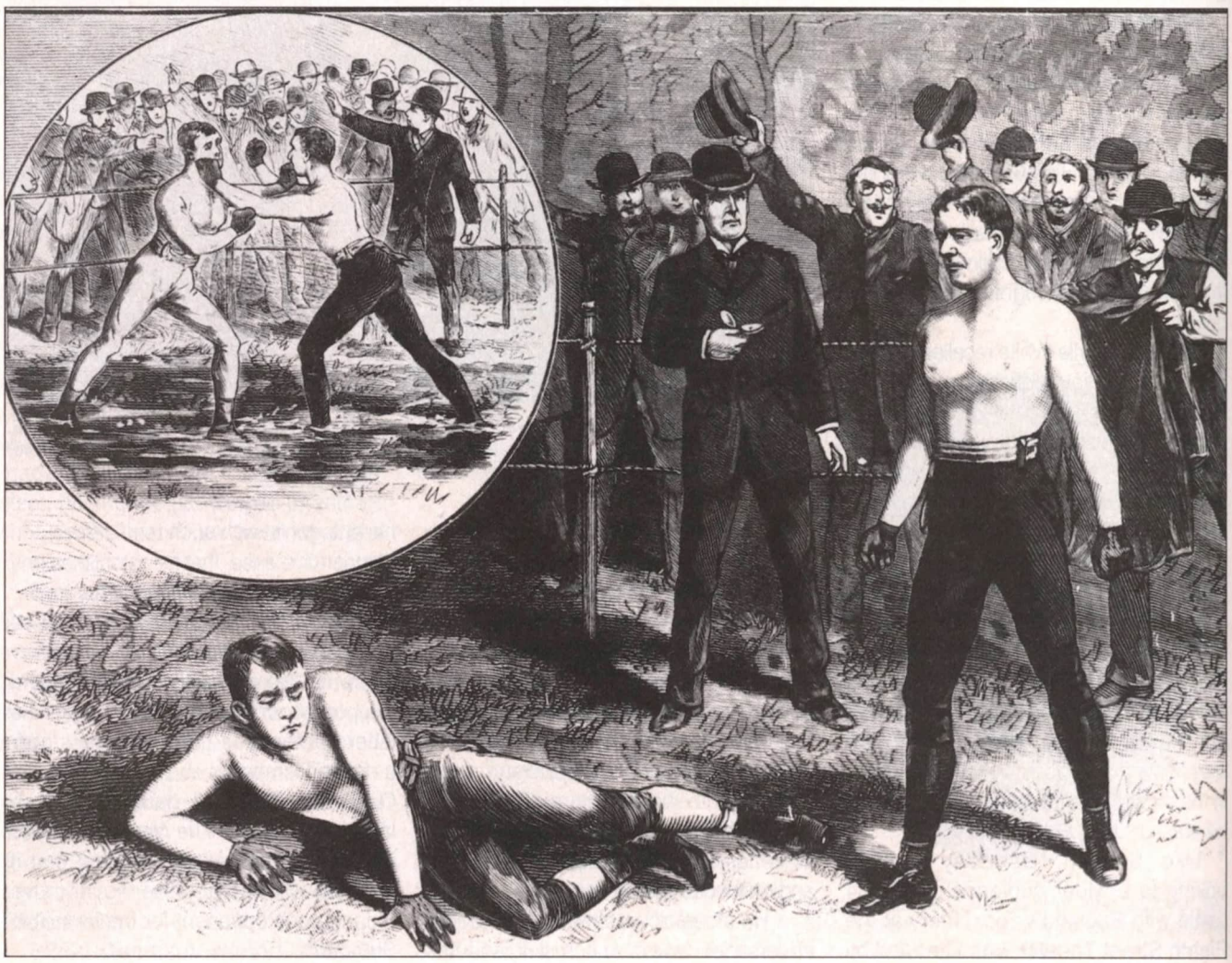
The pinnacle of Dempsey's career may have been his victory over tough George LaBlanche in 1886. The win, a 13th-round kayo, cemented Dempsey's claim to being the top middleweight in the country. As was the custom at the time, Dempsey took money from his own winnings and approached LaBlanche. When Dempsey held the money out, approximately $300, sore loser LaBlanche rammed his forehead into Dempsey's lips. Dempsey was so incensed that he kept the money. But even a bitter loser like LaBlanche would later say of The Nonpareil, "He's a wonder."

Dempsey had been a typical New York Irishman of the time, fond of practical jokes, cigars, and street scuffles. But as he aged, he grew sullen and superstitious. He also grew wary of a public that lionized fighters. "These men never speak or think of me as anything other than a slugging machine," Dempsey told the *Eagle* in 1886. "It never strikes them that I have ideas on any other subject."

After marrying his sweetheart, Maggie Brady of Oregon, Dempsey found the fight game becoming more difficult. Draws and no-contests began appearing on his record. Injuries and illnesses followed, including a broken arm during a bout with Reddy Gallagher, and a bout with pleurisy. After promising his father-in-law that he would retire, Dempsey bought a saloon on Staten Island. The place was closed when authorities learned Dempsey was staging illegal bouts in the basement. After that debacle, Dempsey divided his time between New York and California, fighting exhibitions and tutoring fighters.

As a mentor, Dempsey's methods were unorthodox (he once motivated a tired pugilist by biting him on the earlobe), but the California Athletic Club hired Dempsey as its chief boxing instructor. A young James J. Corbett once asked to spar with The Nonpareil,

Skintight gloves were worn for the Dempsey-Johnny Reagan title bout in 1887, which was fought outdoors in frigid December weather. Dempsey stopped Reagan in the 45th round, giving him such a beating that the challenger didn't fight again for two years.



but Dempsey humiliated the young bank clerk until Corbett reached the boiling point. "That's enough for one day," Dempsey said, laughing. The next day, Dempsey was overheard saying Corbett would be a great fighter one day. Years later, when Corbett spoke at a benefit for Dempsey, he would say that he "copied Dempsey as much as possible."

One of Dempsey's protégés was a young Brooklyn fighter named Jack Files. Dempsey was in Files' corner for a bout with Mike Donovan's protégé, Johnny Reagan. After Reagan won the bout, Donovan approached Dempsey to boast. Dempsey lost his temper and insulted the veteran trainer. This was not the first time "The Professor" and The Nonpareil had sniped in public. Dempsey had got the better of Donovan years earlier in an exhibition. Now he regarded Donovan as a boring old relic who wouldn't give him his due. "He belongs in a glass case," said Dempsey.

Donovan pushed Reagan into a bout with Dempsey. Fighting outdoors in frightful weather for 45 rounds, Dempsey gave Reagan such a beating that Donovan's boy wouldn't fight again for two years. Frustrated, Donovan announced that he would fight Dempsey himself.

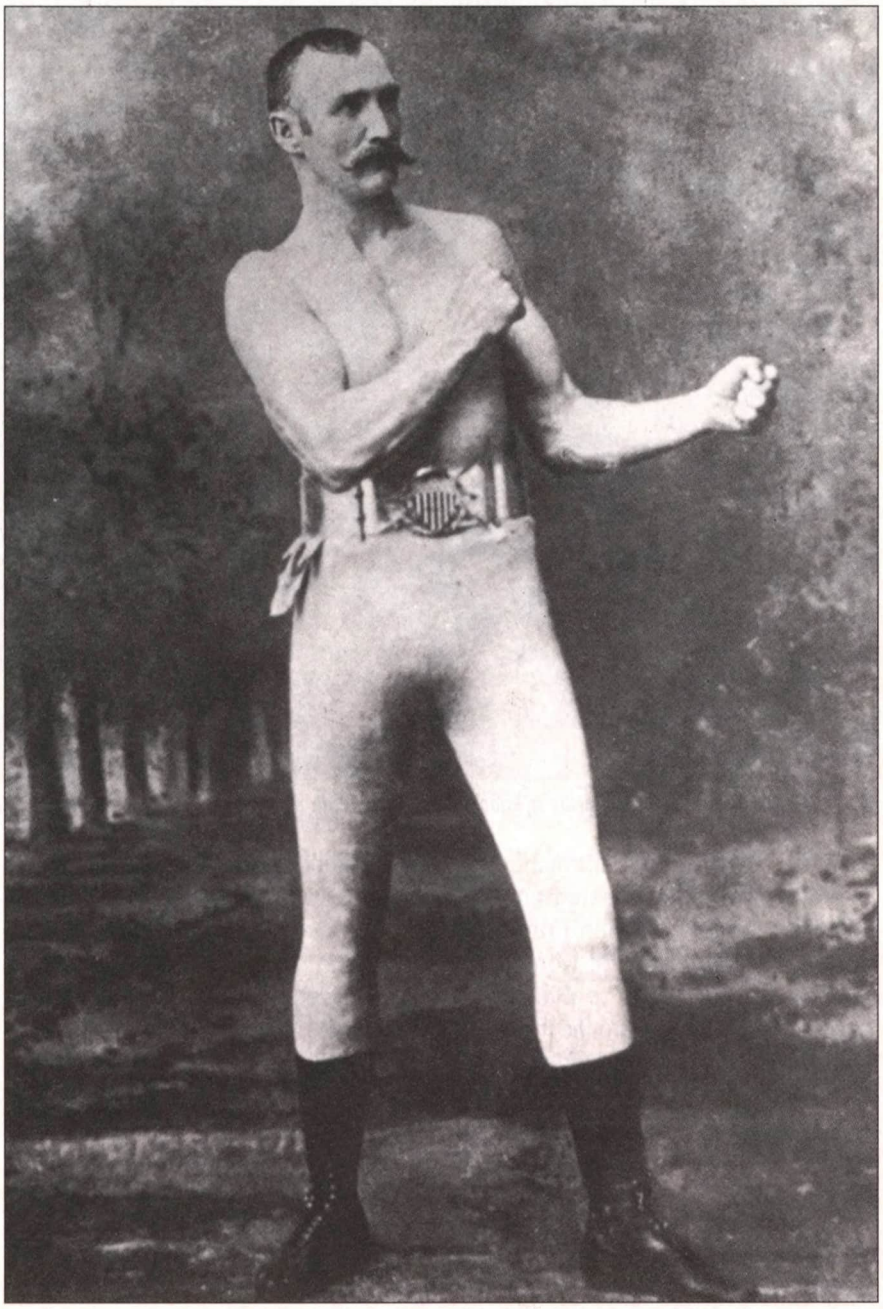
Donovan was an eccentric character with an incredible history. During the civil war, he'd been a drummer boy for the 71st Illinois Infantry, marching in the thick of battle at Kennesaw Mountain. He had claimed the middleweight title in March 1881 after his match with George Rooke was stopped by the police in the second round, but never defended. He boxed an exhibition with Sullivan later that same month and then went to work as the New York Athletic Club's boxing instructor. Donovan was a cult figure within local boxing circles, and his tournaments at the NYAC were among the bloodiest battles New Yorkers had ever seen. He was one of the first fighters to get an endorsement deal, lending his name to promote Hornby's Oatmeal. He bragged that he'd beaten over 500 men.

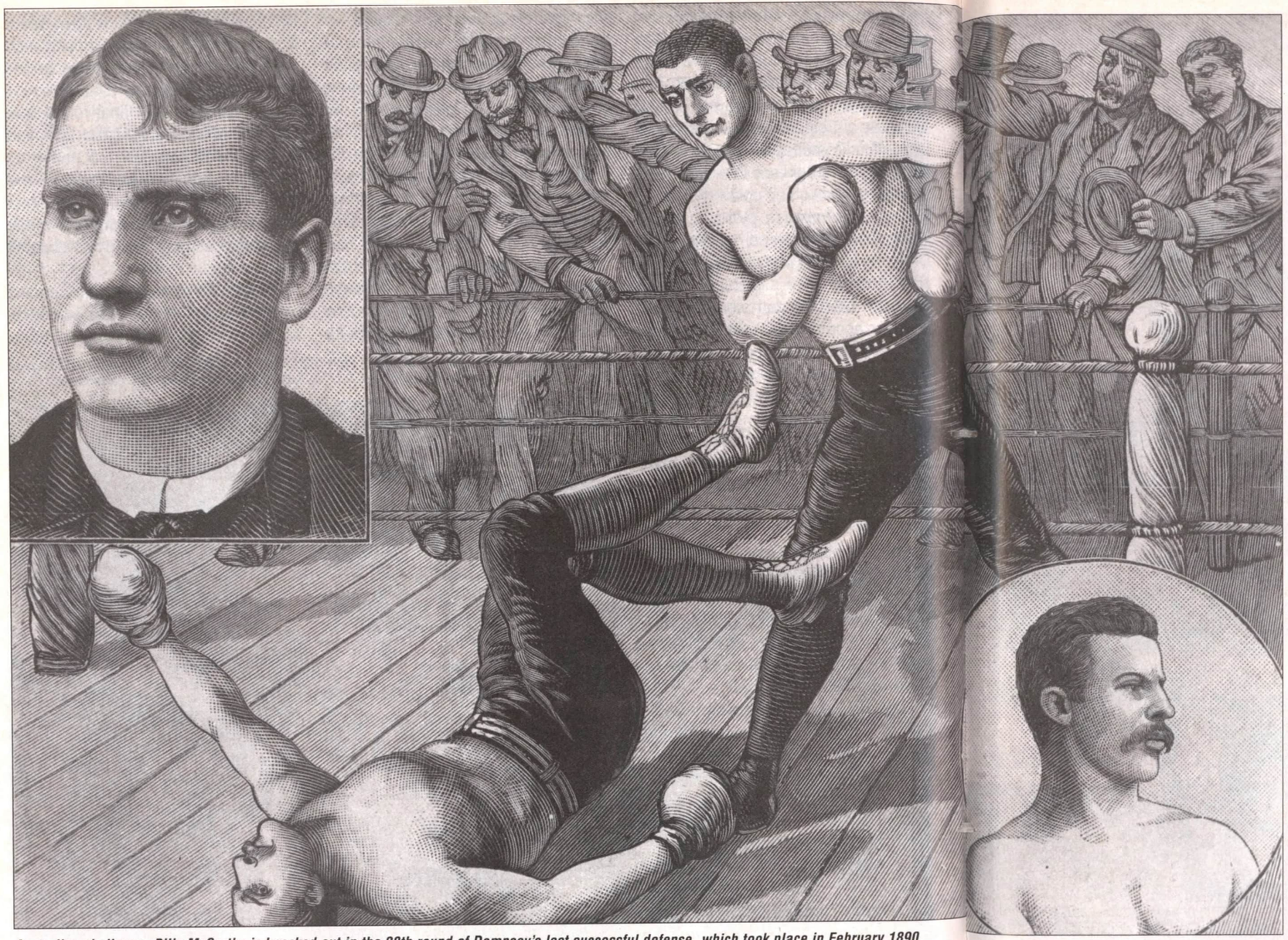
The bout between Dempsey and Donovan, which became a New York sensation, took place on November 15, 1888, at the Palace Rink in Williamsburg. The Professor entered the ring first. He looked remarkable, an aging man of steel in white duck knee britches and black fighting shoes. He leaned over the ropes and shouted to his supporters, "I'm fighting for the old-timers tonight." He was 39. His graying hair and trim mustache gave him the appearance of a stout sergeant major. Dempsey entered the ring next and sat gravely in his corner while Donovan strutted, waving to his cronies.

Early on, Dempsey landed a blow that exploded on Donovan's mouth with such a crack that it was heard all around the hall. Only Donovan's hatred for Dempsey kept him upright. They spent the rest of the fight moving around each other like spinning tops, coming together briefly, igniting sparks, and then spinning away. The sixth and final round was an epic, with Dempsey and Donovan rocking each other in the center of the ring. When the bell sounded, the referee declared the bout a draw. Most ringsiders thought Donovan had won. It was a sign, perhaps, that The Nonpareil was slipping.

A rematch with LaBlanche ended bizarrely when Dempsey was kayoed by an illegal, backhanded punch. Dempsey

Mike Donovan (below) was Dempsey's arch-rival, and after Dempsey beat Donovan protégé Reagan, Donovan came out of retirement in 1888 and held Dempsey to a six-round draw.





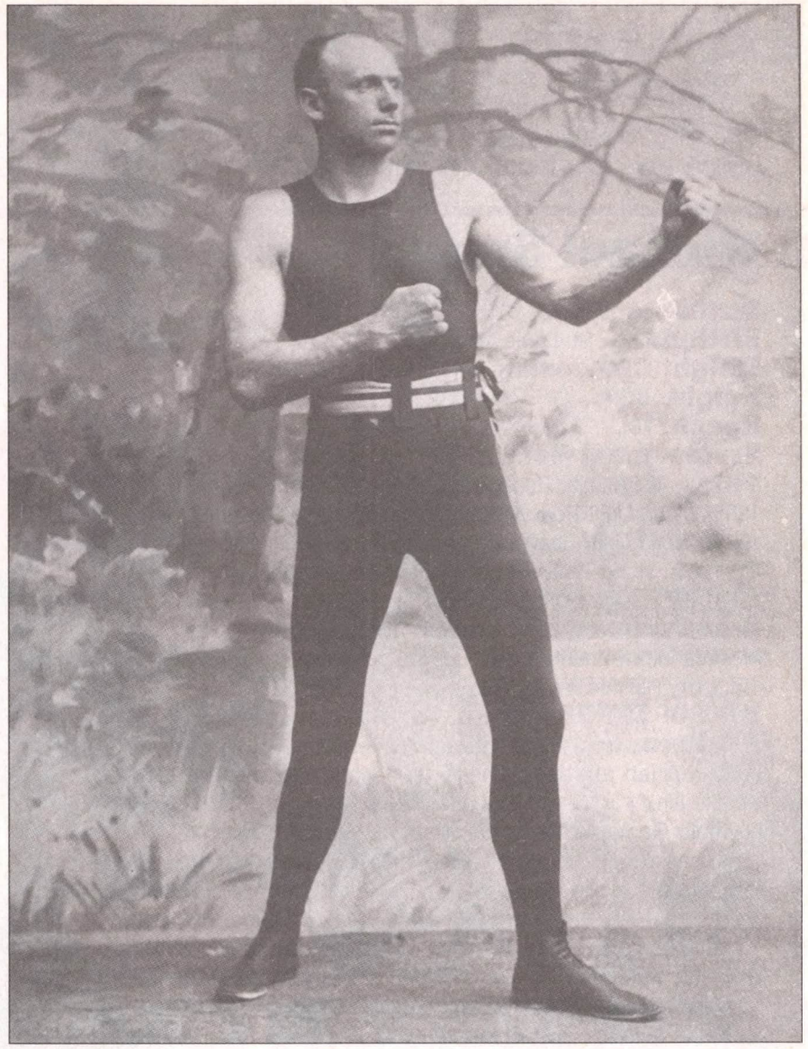
Australian challenger Billy McCarthy is knocked out in the 28th round of Dempsey's last successful defense, which took place in February 1890.

kept the title because LaBlanche had fouled him, but later created an ugly scene at LaBlanche's San Francisco saloon, inspiring a war of words that went on for months. *The Galveston News* said of Dempsey around this time, "He's cool as a block of ice in the ring, but as easily irritated as a wet hen when out of it." Reporters began mentioning Dempsey's coughing jags and haggard appearance.

As his bout with Fitzsimmons neared, rumors emerged that Dempsey was wearing himself out making personal appearances, and picking up short money by refereeing matches. When he finally arrived in New Orleans several days late, he was under-trained and overconfident. "It was a nightmare," said Dempsey's childhood pal, lightweight champion Jack McAuliffe, who had bet a large sum on Dempsey. When he saw that Fitzsimmons had Dempsey on the brink of disaster, McAuliffe tried to stop the bout. Dempsey refused, fighting on until he was kayoed in the 13th.

Now an ex-champion, Dempsey took a turn for the weird: He drank heavily, quit his job at the California AC, telling reporters he was sick of California, and sold his business interests. He also allegedly robbed a Chicago woman of $20, forfeited matches, and received offers from promoters around the country, but never accepted any. After Dempsey had a violent fit at a Wisconsin railway station, Maggie told authorities that he needed special care because he wasn't himself anymore. A newspaper report had Dempsey penniless and alone, staying in a charity ward in St. Joseph's Hospital in St. Paul, brooding over his losses. He told wild tales of being drugged by gamblers, and gave the appearance to all of a man whose mind was disintegrating. When middleweight Dan Creedon received an offer to fight Dempsey, Creedon said, "He's nutty. Anyone who takes him into the ring ought to be disgraced."

After an embarrassing loss to Tommy Ryan, Dempsey tried to kill himself at a Coney Island roadhouse by stabbing his wrist with a fork. Quickly, the word spread that Dempsey was insane. He would die of tuberculosis within the year, just short of his 33rd birthday.



Bob Fitzsimmons as he looked in 1894, three years after he stopped Dempsey to annex the middleweight title. By the time he lost the title, Dempsey was already suffering from tuberculosis.

Nearly 4,000 people attended the Portland funeral, but as history cherry picked its legends from the era, Dempsey's name faded, while Sullivan's status grew. Still, when one columnist dismissed Dempsey as a pitiful drunk, Sullivan threatened to crush the writer with his bare hands. Sullivan had secretly revered Dempsey and considered him a fallen comrade. In fact, he had shared Dempsey's last public moment.

In June of 1895, a massive crowd filed into Madison Square Garden for a benefit in Dempsey's honor. At the evening's end, Sullivan guided the frail Dempsey into the ring to a thunderous roar of applause. Then, to the surprise of the gathering, Sullivan announced that he and Dempsey would spar for three rounds. "We will do the best we can," Sullivan said, "even though we're two has-beens."

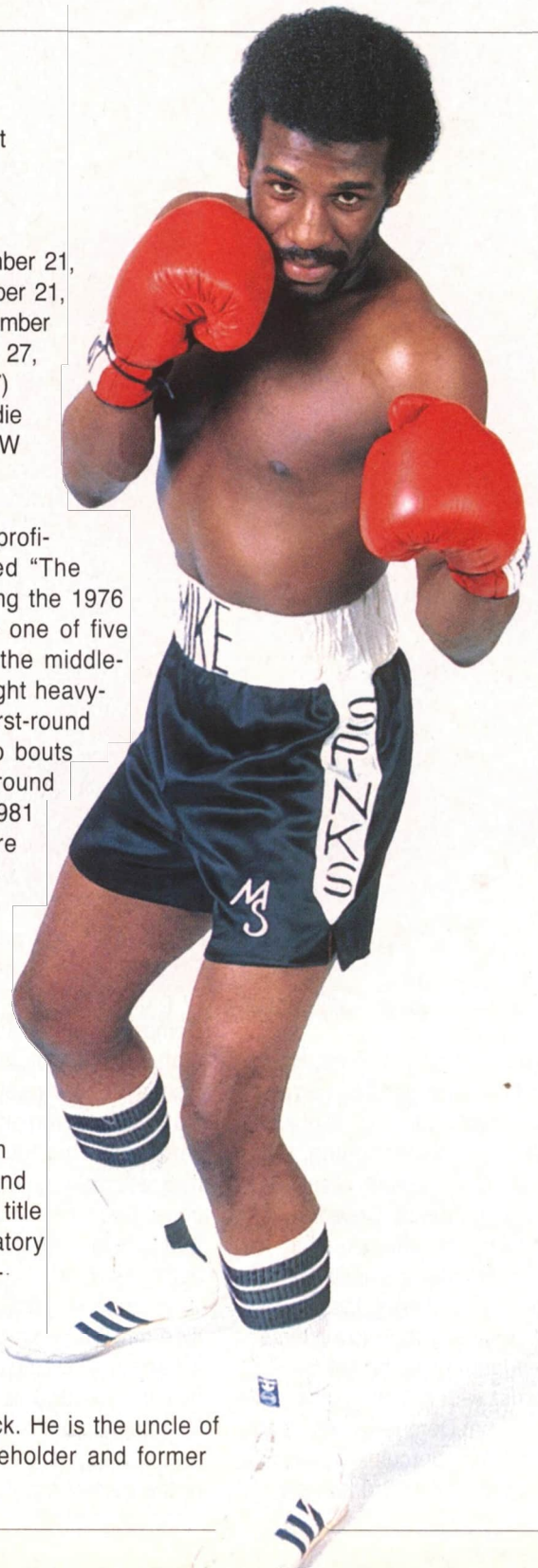
The Great John L and The Nonpareil were finally in the ring together. The two titans, one grossly overweight and trying to kick an alcohol addiction, the other dying of consumption, gave little more than a careful pantomime. Still, cheers greeted each parry loud enough to split the heavens. This was the final ovation Dempsey would hear. Then he was off to Oregon, and a dark room that smelled like roses. ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and a regular contributor to THE RING.

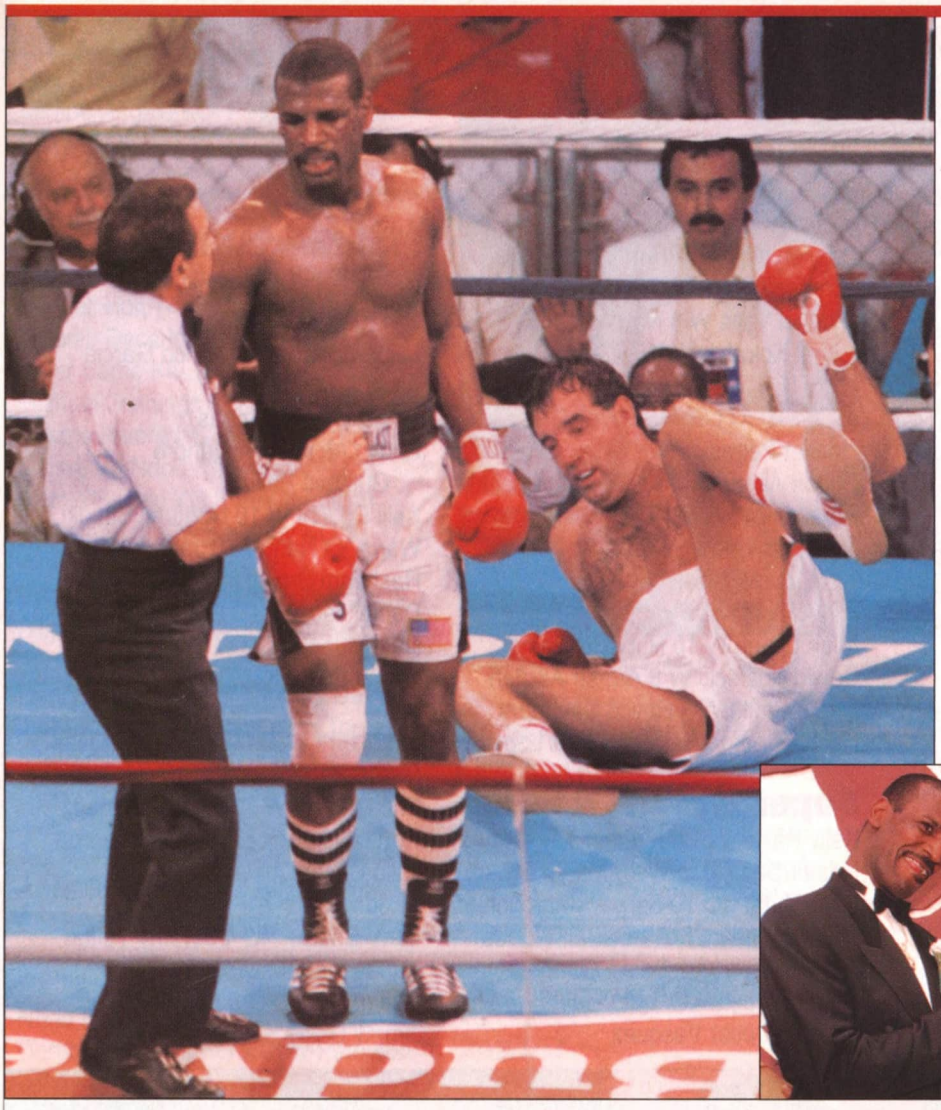
Hall of Fame Profile

THE RING features a thumbnail biography of a ring great who has received the ultimate honor: induction into the international Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York

Michael Spinks



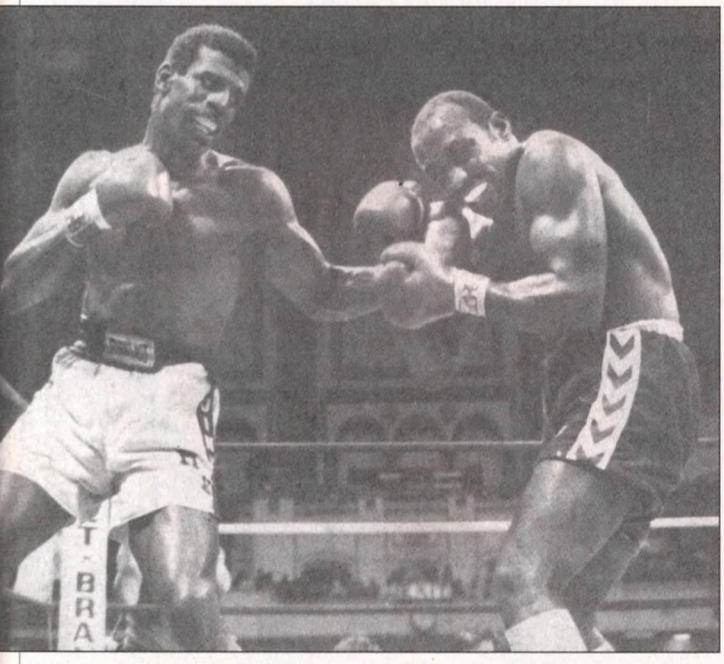
Birthdate: July 13, 1956
Birthplace: St. Louis, Missouri
Weight Classes: Light heavyweight, Heavyweight
Height: 6'3"
Reach: 76"
Professional Record: 31-1 (21)
Titles: WBA Light Heavyweight (July 18, 1981-September 21, 1985), WBC Light Heavyweight (March 18, 1983-September 21, 1985), World Light Heavyweight (February 25, 1984-September 21, 1985), World Heavyweight (September 21, 1985-June 27, 1988), IBF Heavyweight (September 21, 1985-May 30, 1987)
Best Performances: Marvin Johnson (KO 4), Eddie Mustafa Muhammad (W 15), Dwight Muhammad Qawi (W 15), Larry Holmes (W 15, W 15), Gerry Cooney (KO 5)
Year Of IBHOF Induction: 1994
Background: A tall, awkward boxer with a highly proficient left jab and a dynamite right hand (nicknamed "The Spinks Jinx") ... Originally came into prominence during the 1976 Olympic Games in Montreal, Canada, where he was one of five American boxers to win a gold medal. Michael won the middleweight class, while his brother, Leon, took home the light heavyweight gold ... Turned pro on April 16, 1977, with a first-round kayo of Eddie Benson, and was undefeated in 15 pro bouts when he captured the WBA 175-pound title with a 15-round decision over Eddie Mustafa Muhammad on July 18, 1981 ... Made five successful defenses of WBA belt before unifying the title with a 15-round decision over WBC titleholder Dwight Muhammad Qawi on March 18, 1983 ... Following four successful defenses of the unified title, he became the first ever (and still the only) light heavyweight champion to win the heavyweight title when he upset Larry Holmes via 15-round decision on September 21, 1985, in Las Vegas. The fight was THE RING's 1985 Upset of the Year ... Retained title in close, controversial rematch with Holmes, and then knocked out Steffen Tangstad in the fourth round on September 6, 1986, in his second defense ... Stripped of IBF version of the heavyweight title for refusing to fight the alphabet organization's mandatory challenger, Tony Tucker, in favor of taking a more lucrative match with Gerry Cooney. Retained linear and RING heavyweight titles until suffering his only professional loss, a first-round kayo at the hands of Mike Tyson on July 27, 1988 ... Retired shortly after the Tyson defeat and never attempted a comeback. He is the uncle of Cory Spinks, the reigning IBF junior middleweight titleholder and former world welterweight champion.



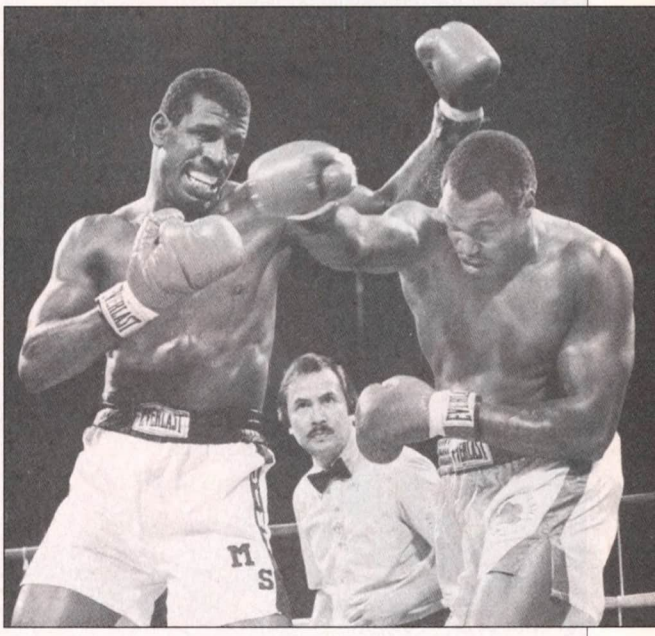
Gerry Cooney hits the deck in the fifth round of his 1987 bout with Spinks in Atlantic City. Cooney, who weighed almost 30 pounds more than Spinks, failed to beat referee Frank Cappuccino's count.

Spinks poses with manager Butch Lewis (center) and brother Leon at the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 1994, the year Michael was inducted.

PHOTO BY TEDDY BLACKBURN



Spinks cracks Qawi with a left hook en route to unifying the light heavyweight title via 15-round decision in 1983. Spinks controlled the tension-filled but uneventful match by preventing the shorter Qawi from getting inside.



Spinks and Holmes fire lefts during their historic encounter in September 1985 that resulted in Spinks becoming the first light heavyweight champion to win the heavyweight title. That's referee Carlos Padilla peeking between the two fighters.

[Summary]

Heavyweights

Alexander Povetkin W 12
Eddie Chambers
Derrick Rossy W 12 Ray Mercer
Nicolay Valuev W 12 Sergei Liakhovich
Chris Arreola KO 1 Cliff Couser
Tommy Morrison KO 3 Matt Weishaar
Michael Moorer KO 1 Shelby Gross
Jason Estrada W 10 Charles Shufford
Albert Sosnowski W 10 Colin Kenna
Monte Barrett KO2 Damon Reed
Chazz Witherspoon KO 4
Jonathan Haggler
Osborne Machimana KO1
Corrie Sanders
Kali Meehan KO 3 Jeremy Bates
Francesco Pianeta KO 3
Donnell Wiggins
Fabio Moli KO 2 Hector Sotelo
J.D. Chapman KO 2 Rich Boruff

Cruiserweights

Krzysztof Wlodarczyk KO 4
Gabor Halasz
B.J. Flores W 12 Darnell Wilson
Damian Norris W 10 Michael Simms
Tomasz Adamek W 8 Josip Jalusic
Lou Del Valle W 8 Newton Kidd
Pawel Kolodziej KO 7 Laszlo Hubert

Light Heavyweights

Hamlet Petrosyan W 12 Jhon Berrio
Rudolf Asaturyan KO 8 Artem Vychkin
Rachid Kanfouah KO 4 Belaid Ahsam
Jose Luis Herrera KO 3
George Blades
Elvir Muriqi KO 4 Jameel Wilson
Allan Green W 10 Rubin Williams
Dawid Kostecki W 8 Armen Azizian
Dhafir Smith W 8 Rayco Saunders
Hector Camacho Jr. W 6 Luis Lopez

Super Middleweights

Kelly Pavlik W 12 Jermain Taylor
Nestor Casanova W 10 Martin Bruer
Karo Murat KO 10 Sergey Kharchenko
Louis Sargeant KO 4 Darrell Woods
Thierry Karl KO 2 Dejan Ribac
Ruben Acosta KO 1
Julio Cesar Vasquez

Middleweights

Sebastian Sylvester W 12
Francois Bastient
Lajuan Simon W 10 Elco Garcia
Amin Asikainen KO 7
Yory Boy Campas
Andy Lee KO 5 Alejandro
Gustavo Falliga
Keiji Eguchi W 10 Norifumi Suzuki
Wang Ya Nan W 10 Janaya Davis
Rasheem Brown KO 3 Jose Medina
Daniel Jacobs KO 2 Alexander Volkov
Danny Jacobs KO 1 Hector Lopez
Marco Rubio KO 7 Jose Zertuche

Junior Middleweights

Delvin Rodriguez W 10 Troy Browning
Eric Mitchell W 10 Edwin Vazquez
Ronald Hearns KO 8 Juan Astorga
Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. KO 8
Jose Celaya
Larry Sharpe KO 4 Jeremy Yelton
Vanes Martirosyan KO 3 Michi Munoz
Adnan Amar KO 3 Ian MacKillop
Jimmy Colas KO 2 Miguel Pena

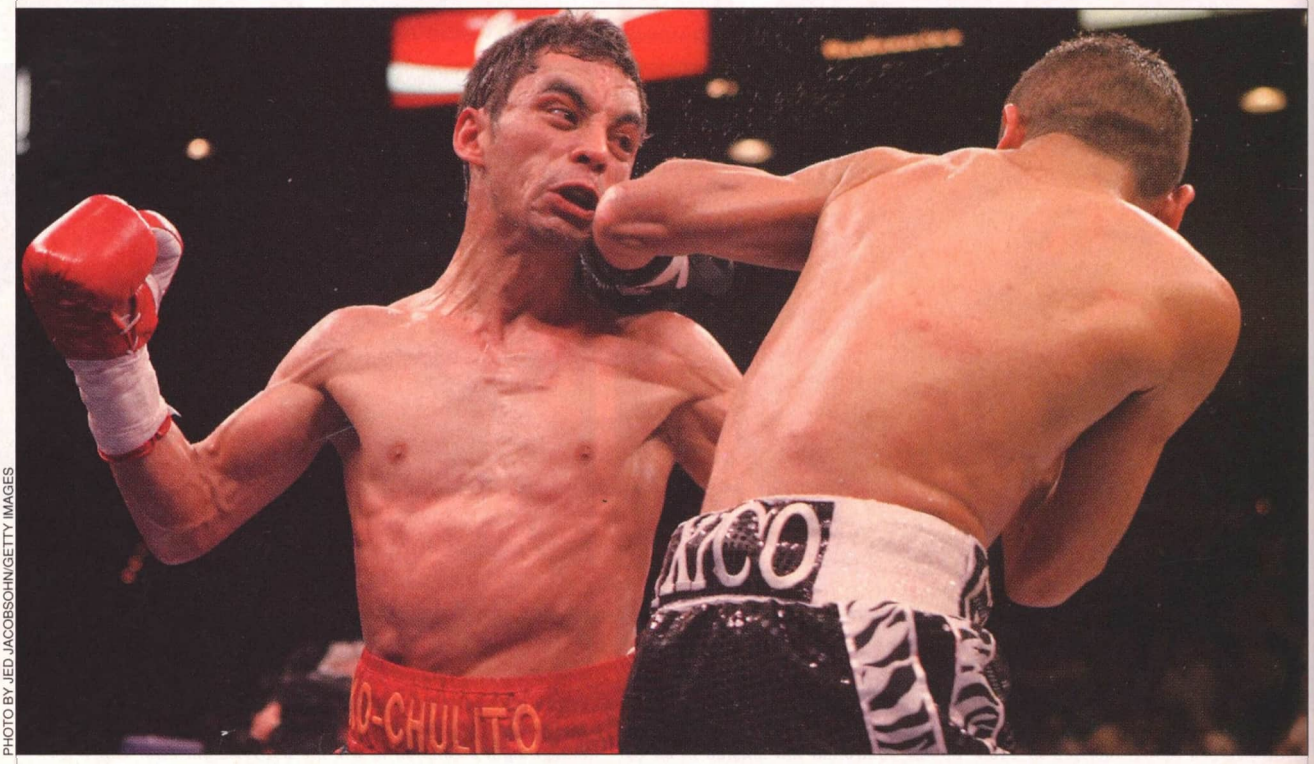


PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

Junior bantamweight Fernando Montiel looks to land a right on Martin Castillo

Ulises Lopez KO 2 Juan Alaggio
Floyd Trumpet KO 2 Ian Blue
Alfredo Angulo KO 1 Ricardo Cortes
Sergio Martinez W 4 David Toribio

Welterweights

Carlos Quintana W 12 Paul Williams
Colin Lynes W 12 Juho Tolppola
Kendall Holt W 10 Ben Tackie
Antonin Decarie W 10 Israel Cardona
Peter Semo KO 10 Fedele Bellusci
Michael Jennings KO 9 Ross Minter
Cosme Rivera KO 8 Raul Pinzon
Lovemore Ndou KO 7 Rafael Ortiz
Motoki Sasaki KO 6 Rev Santillan
Yodsanan Sor Nanthachai KO 3
Mar Suvanichev
Henry Bruseles KO 4 Robert Frankel
Billy Walsh W 10 James Gorman
Andre Berto KO 6 Michel Trabant
Henry Crawford W 8 Thomas Davis
Jeffrey Resto W 8 Humberto Tapia
Ishe Smith KO 2 Carlos De La Cruz
Holly Holm W 10 Belinda Laracuente

Junior Welterweights

Ajose Olusegun W 12 Nigel Wright
Ali Oubaali W 10 Ashley Theophane
Mike Alvarado W 10 Jesus Rodriguez
Michel Rosales KO 2 Dairo Esalas
Norio Kimura KO 7 Kenryo Matsumoto
Derrick Samuels KO 3 Cory Peterson
Martin Coggi KO 3 Juan Carlos Alamo
Ivan Valle KO 2 Felix Bojorquez
Angelo Santana KO 1 Kenny Keaton
Lenny DeVictoria W 8 Derrick Moon

Lightweights

Amir Khan W 12 Gairy St. Clair
Rafael Guzman KO 10
Ernesto Gonzalez
Oscar Galindo KO 4 Leonardo Resendiz
Chevelle Hallback W 10
Melissa Hernandez

Junior Lightweights

Takashi Uchiyama KO 10
Akira Yamazaki
Monte Meza-Clay KO 7 Erik Aiken
Miguel Garcia KO 5 Jorge Ruiz
Jonathan Barros KO 2 Victor Paz
Melissa Fiorentino Tech. Win 6
Ela Nunez
Carlos Ivan Velazquez KO 1
Ever Luis Perez
Mickey Bey Jr. W 8 Roberto Acevedo

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Flyweight Brian Viloria misses with a left hook against Cesar Lopez

Featherweights

Chris John KO 7 Roinet Caballero
(Retains WBA Title)
Nicky Cook KO 2 Kirkor Kirkorov
Masaaki Serie KO 10 Yujiro Sugita
Matt Remillard W 10 Manuel Perez
Fahsai Sakkreerin KO 3 Van Bantilan
Rafael Urias KO 3 Juan Valenzuela
Mario Santiago KO1 Edel Ruiz

Junior Featherweights

Bernabe Concepcion W 12 Juan Ruiz
Antonio Escalante W 10
Jose Beranza
Ciso Morales W 10 Marangin Marbun
Monico Laurente KO 5 Robert Rubillar
Takalani Ndlovu KO 4
Raymond Sermona
Carlos Oliiveira KO 3 Renato Pedro
Francisco Arce KO 3 Rodolfo Garay

Bantamweights

Malik Bouziane W 10 Jean-Marie Codet
Silence Mabuza KO 8 Eden Sonsona
Rolly Matsushita KO 1 Aldo Hummer
Medgoen Singsurat W 6
Denpayak Sor Pisanu

Junior Bantamweights

Cristian Mijares W 12 Jose Navarro
(Retains WBC Title)
Fernando Montiel KO 4 Martin Castillo
Vic Darchinyan D 12 Z Gorres
Kohei Kono W 12 Kuniyuki Aizawa
Eric Morel W 8 Felipe Almanza
Kenji Ohba KO 2
Phetchbhuphan Sishpraka-ifah
William Gonzalez KO 1
Arturo Valenzuela
Junichiro Sugita KO 1
Deeden Sithsaithong

Flyweights

Omar Narvaes W 12 Carlos Tamara
Hugo Cazares W 10 Kermin Guardia
Arnel Tadena W 10 Alex Aroy
Brian Viloria W 8 Cesar Lopez
Ratanapol Sor Vorapin KO 2
Pingping Tepura
Santiago Acosta KO 5
Ariel Humberto Alassia

Junior Flyweights

Edgar Sosa W 12 Jesus Iribe
Jose Sanchez KO 6 Carlos Villagran
Munetsugu Kayo Tech. Draw 5
Takashi Kunishige
Adrian Hernandez KO 4 Rodel Mayol

Strawweights

Kwanthai Chor Nor Pattalung W 12
Sofyan Efendi
Denver Cuello KO 5 Dennis Juntillano
Donnie Mabao W 10 Rodel Tejares
Pornsawan Kratingdaenggym KO 5
Richard Garcia
Denver Cuello Tech. Draw 3
Armand De La Cruz

Alex Bunema KO 10 Roman Karmazin

New York, New York: The New York Giants will undoubtedly go down as the great upset sports story of 2008, but on the eve of their win over Green Bay to advance to the Super Bowl, Madison Square Garden played host to the first noteworthy upset on the '08 boxing calendar. Journeyman Bunema was viewed as a mere stay-busy opponent for Karmazin, THE RING's second rated junior middleweight coming into the bout, but he hung in there for nine awkward rounds and shocked the Russian with powerpunches in the 10th, scoring a stunning stoppage at the 1:24 mark.

The three American judges all had Karmazin on top through nine rounds, Billy Costello scoring it 89-82, Don Ackerman 88-83, and Wynn Kintz 87-84. THE RING had it just 87-85 for Karmazin. It was a tough fight to judge because of the lack of action, but if you paid close enough attention, you realized that underdog Bunema was giving Karmazin some problems before breaking through in round 10. CompuBox punch stats suggested as much, seeing Bunema outland Karmazin significantly in powerpunches, 79 to 52.

The first two rounds were largely a staring contest between two guys looking to counterpunch. Bunema, 153, Atlanta, Georgia, via Kinshasa, Zaire, took charge in round three, landing a pair of flush right hands and some sharp jabs off the ropes. Karmazin, 151¾, Los Angeles, California, via St. Petersburg, Russia, bounced back in the fourth, hurting Bunema with a short right hand and forcing him to hold.

Rounds five and six were both nearly impossible to score, as neither man was willing to get close enough to land well, and neither man wanted to lead (Bunema in particular). In the last minute of the seventh, Karmazin, 35, finally began to find a groove, scoring with a left hook that moved Bunema back. But Bunema, 32, responded by staggering the favorite with an overhand right in the eighth, earning the round on all three judges' cards. The ninth round was the first of the fight to feature anything resembling sustained back-and-forth action, as both boxers sacrificed a little defense and began punching in combination.

Karmazin, 36-3-1 (23), continued sacrificing defense in round 10, and he paid for it when Bunema landed a couple of hard rights and then a left hook, dropping Karmazin for a brief count just 40 seconds into the round. Bunema pounced with two left hands, but Karmazin fought back, landing a nice right of his own. The Russian's success was very short-lived, however, as Bunema, 29-5-2 (15), hurt him with another right hand, causing Karmazin to wobble to the corner of the ring. Bunema unleashed a furious assault, and a huge right hand finished the job, crumpling Karmazin. Referee Johnny Callas (USA) started to count, but quickly waved it off when he got a good look at Karmazin's lifeless body slumped along the ropes.

Bunema calls himself "The Technician." For nine rounds, living up to that name nearly put the crowd on hand for the Roy Jones-Felix Trinidad main event to sleep. But in the 10th round, he started acting less like a technician and put Karmazin to sleep in an early candidate for Upset of the Year recognition.

Television: **HBO Pay-Per-View**
Promoters: **Don King Productions, Square Ring**
(1-19-08)
Eric Raskin

Andrew Golota W 12 Mike Mollo

New York, New York: Knowledgeable boxing fans tend to greet the news of another Golota comeback with either dread or indifference, but two weeks after turning 40, "The Foul Pole" surprised us all by producing first-rate entertainment in beating the limited Mollo on the Jones-Trinidad undercard. This crossroads heavyweight bout featured Golota gutting it out (imagine that!) with a horribly swollen left eye, Mollo refusing to go down despite fighting the final four rounds on rubber legs, and an appreciative Madison Square Garden crowd rising to its feet at the end.

Golota, absent from boxing from May '05 (when Lamon Brewster dusted him in 52 seconds) until June '07, appears to have found a particular type of opponent he can have success against: white guys. Golota's comeback

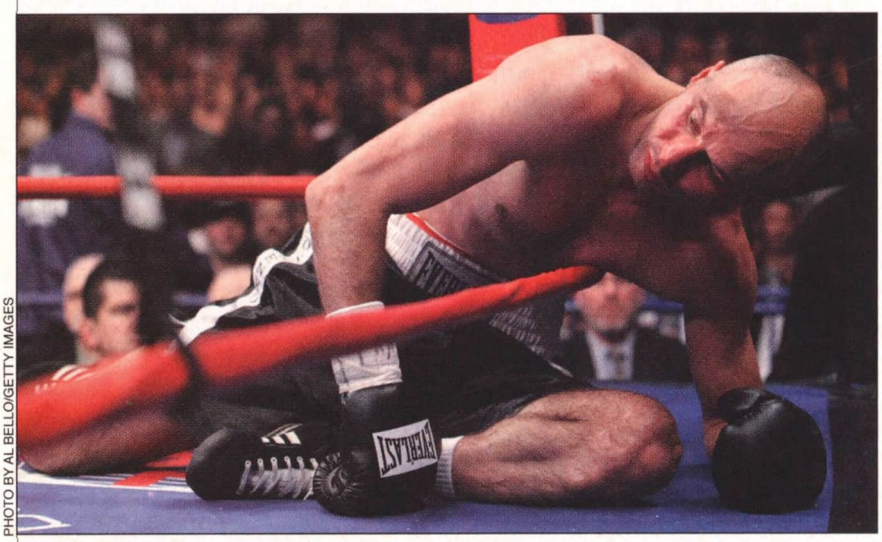


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Karmazin suffers shocking kayo loss at the hands of Bunema

began with a second-round TKO of Jeremy Bates, followed by a sixth-round stoppage of Kevin McBride. Mollo, a 27-year-old from Oak Lawn, Illinois, who also holds a win over McBride, fit the bill nicely. He was just good enough and plenty brave enough to make the fight entertaining, but it only took a round or two to realize he was at a major skill disadvantage against Golota.

Mollo, 222, blitzed Golota over the fight's first 20 seconds, digging to the body relentlessly and doing enough in that brief span to win the round on all three cards despite the Chicago-based Polish veteran clearly outboxing him over the final two minutes of the round. Golota, 237, easily won the second and third rounds, rocking Mollo several times with right hands in round two and doing damage with both his jab and his straight right in the third.

Mollo stunned Golota momentarily with a right hand in the fourth, and round five featured compelling two-way action. By the end of the round, however, Golota's left eye was swelling shut, and the fight remained close in rounds six and seven as Mollo tried to take advantage of his opponent's injury.

Soon, however, Mollo found himself without the energy to take advantage of anything. He began round eight well, catching Golota with a combination as the European stood up too straight. But a sudden burst of clean shots from Golota caused Mollo to back off, either too hurt or too tired (or both) to answer back. With just a couple of seconds left in the round, Golota landed two more rights, wobbling Mollo badly, but the bell saved him.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Golota overcomes closed eye and Mollo in fun slugfest

[The Ring Fighter of the Month]

Carlos Quintana

Paul Williams was supposed to be the welterweight with the style to give everyone fits. From Floyd Mayweather to Miguel Cotto, Williams was the perfect guy to beat them. Too tall, too busy, too everything, they said.

What they didn't talk about was whether there was someone out there with the style to give Williams fits. But as it turned out, Carlos Quintana was too clever, too well-prepared, and too focused to lose to Williams. An 8-1 underdog, Quintana had all of Williams' movements timed from the start, and it wasn't long before Williams realized his undefeated record was in serious jeopardy.

Still, Williams was tall enough and busy enough (not to mention sturdy-chinned enough) to remain in the fight most of the way. But there was no doubt when it was over that he'd been on the receiving end of a lesson in how timing beats height.

Is Quintana the perfect fighter to beat Mayweather and Cotto? Well, Cotto already handed him his only loss (via fifth-round stoppage), and Mayweather would probably get the better of him as well. But "El Indio" was the perfect fighter to expose Williams. And that makes him the perfect pick for Fighter of the Month.

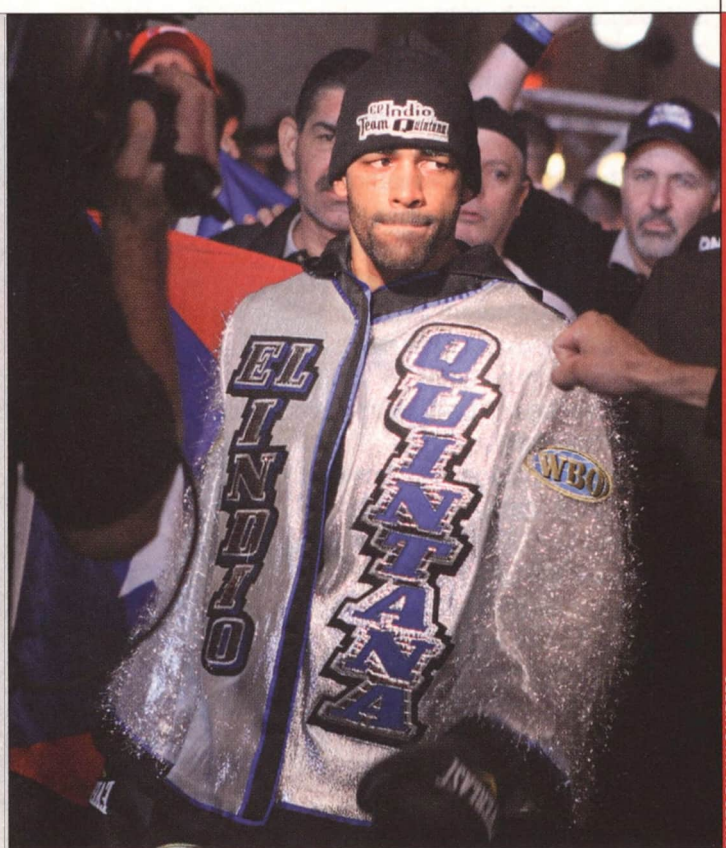


PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Golota dished out a beating in the ninth, but the gutsy Mollo refused to go down. At the bell, he needed help from his trainer just to get back to his corner, but of course he came out for round 10, still trying to win—perhaps inspired by the increasingly grotesque state of Golota's eye. Golota kept pounding Mollo in the 10th, and by the 11th, "Merciless Mike" was seeking mercy, holding as much as possible to survive. Golota, 41-6-1 (33), battered Mollo, 19-2 (12), in the 12th, earning a 10-8 round from two of the judges, but the younger man refused to touch the canvas, earning the admiration of the boisterous crowd.

Judge Bob Gilson (USA) scored the fight 116-110, Tom Schreck (USA) had it 116-112, and Robin Taylor (USA) saw it 118-109, all for Golota. THE RING had the Pole on top 118-110.

The referee was Randy Neumann (USA).

Television: **HBO Pay-Per-View**

Promoters: **Don King Productions, Square Ring**

(1-19-08)

Eric Raskin

Chris John KO 7 Roinet Caballero

Senayan, Indonesia: An event called the "World Boxing Concert" combined prizefights with dinner, dancing girls, and Indonesia's top rock bands in an attempt to bring yet another twist to the boxing norm. Despite the hoopla, though, there was no doubt as to what was the real attraction at Bung Karno Indoor Stadium: the WBA featherweight title fight between Indonesia's iconic hero, Chris John, and mandatory challenger Roinet Caballero of Panama.

In John's previous outing, he fought in Kobe, Japan, battering Zaiki Takemoto over nine rounds. Since then, manager-trainer Craig Christian and John have set their sights on branding the Chris John name throughout Southeast Asia. Chris John hats and T-shirts are a hot commodity in Indonesia, and working in conjunction with the X2 Brand Group and John's newly founded management company, the beltholder looks to grow even more popular. It remains to be seen whether this can translate into worldwide popularity.

Both fighters started the bout cautiously, with John, 126, feinting and Caballero, 125½, moving, occasionally lunging in, and attempting to surprise John with a heavy blow. By the end of the round, though, John was landing his jab and peppering Caballero with bodyshots, further fanning the flames of the raucous Indonesian crowd.

Caballero picked up the pace in the next two rounds, but John, 28, was the sharper fighter, peppering the 24-year-old Panamanian with stiff jabs and straight rights. Caballero was game, however, coming forward whenever John would allow it, landing now and again.

By round four, John added an additional punch from his repertoire, the left hook to the head and body. Caballero punched less and moved more, and was beginning to show the first signs of desperation. By the seventh, John was clearly in charge and Caballero had no defense left. Like a wrecking ball bent on demolishing an unyielding structure, left hook after left hook collided into the liver of Caballero, and by round's end, it was clear the conclusion was nearing.

Between rounds, referee Raul Caiz Jr. (USA) looked in on Caballero to review his condition. Seconds later, just before the start of round eight, Caballero's corner admitted they were defeated and Caiz stopped the bout.

After the bout, the Panamanian was gracious in his appraisal of his conqueror. "Chris John is a great, great champion and we have nothing but respect for him," said Caballero, 22-8-1 (16).

After each John fight, the first question is always, "Are there any plans to fight in the U.S. in the future?" Manager Christian offered the same knee-jerk response he always does: "If the offer is right, we'll fight anyone, anywhere, anytime."

John, 41-0-1 (22), earned $215,000 for defending the title, while Caballero received $70,000.

Promoter: **MTM Promotions**

(1-26-08)

Scott Mallon

PHOTO BY ADEK BERRY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

John backs Caballero into a corner en route to TKO victory

Hozumi Hasegawa W 12 Simone Maludrottu

Osaka, Japan: In the main event of a bantamweight title twinbill, slick southpaw Hasegawa, 117¾, Japan, successfully retained the WBC bantam belt as he displayed his speed and skills against game and durable Italian challenger Maludrottu, 117½. Hasegawa was bleeding from the second round on, but he persevered to win a unanimous verdict over 12 gory rounds. Like fellow titlist Wladimir Sidorenko in the co-feature, Hasegawa didn't give his finest performance, but it was still interesting to see the two beltholders in the same ring and be able to compare them.

Against Hasegawa, European titleholder Maludrottu looked very tense and stiff and didn't throw punches smoothly in the first four rounds. The open scoring system after the fourth indicated that Hasegawa was ahead 40-36 (twice) and 39-37. The Japanese lefty, who was making his fifth defense, easily piled up those points by hitting the stationary target with fast combinations. But Hasegawa had a laceration opened in the second round, and according to referee Kenny Bayless (USA), it was caused by a legal shot (though a big screen in the arena showed on replays that it was obviously produced by a collision of heads). It became a nuisance for Hasegawa in later rounds as the cut widened and kept streaming blood down the cheek.

Maludrottu shifted his stance from orthodox to southpaw and back in every round. In the fifth, the 29-year-old Italian turned loose and kept going forward and stalking the elusive Hasegawa to win a point.

In the sixth, however, Hasegawa, two years his challenger's junior at 27, took back command, and remained in charge for the next five rounds, connecting with left-right countering combinations. In round seven, Maludrottu maintained the pressure, but absorbed effective combinations all the while. The eighth saw Maludrottu sustain a cut on the left eyebrow, making it a doubly messy affair.

The intermediate scores after the eighth were 79-73 and 78-74 twice, all in favor of the southpaw titlist. In the ninth, Hasegawa had both hands down and moved to and fro to avert Maludrottu's combos, and whipped him with quick shots to the face and breadbasket.

The 11th round was clearly won by Maludrottu, who kept stalking the fading beltholder wherever he moved. THE RING also gave the final session to Maludrottu, but all three judges saw it for Hasegawa. The Italian remained aggressive, pinning Hasegawa to the ropes. Hasegawa retaliated with faster punches with his back to the ropes, and the judges might have seen his punches as more effective, though THE RING disagreed.

But the final round didn't matter anyway, as veteran judge Duane Ford (USA) saw it 117-111, David Sutherland (USA) had it 118-110, and Victor Cervantes (Mexico) saw it 116-112, all for Hasegawa.

In the future, Hasegawa, 23-2 (7), had better employ a better cutman, as he kept bleeding throughout the fight. Without that blood to contend with, the beltholder might have been able to give a better performance.

Maludrottu, 26-2 (9), said afterward, "Hasegawa was a good champion. I admit my defeat, but the differences of scores seem a little too big, as I think it was closer than they tallied."

Promoters: **Akihiko Honda's Teiken Promotions, Shinsei Promotions**

(1-10-08)

Joe Koizumi

Wladimir Sidorenko W 12 Nobuto Ikehara

Osaka, Japan: In the co-feature to Hasegawa-Maludrottu, WBA bantam titlist Sidorenko, 117¾, made the sixth successful defense of his belt as he fought toe-to-toe against game but inaccurate Japanese challenger Ikehara, 118, and pounded out a unanimous decision over 12 hard-fought rounds. Judge Sergio Caiz (USA) scored it 118-110, Erkki Meronen (Finland) 116-112, and Michael Lee (Korea) 119-110. The referee was Rafael Ramos (USA).

It wasn't as easy a defense for the Germany-based Ukrainian as the scorecards indicated. Ikehara, the physically larger man, got off to a good start in mixing it up with the shorter Sidorenko, scoring with good rights on the inside. But the 31-year-old Sidorenko took back the initiative and was in command in rounds two through five. In the closing seconds of round two, the stout, 5'4" Sidorenko landed a solid overhand right that left Ikehara, also 31 and three inches taller, staggering temporarily.

They exchanged short punches for all three minutes of the third, and Sidorenko's accurate punches left the Japanese challenger with a gash over the right eyebrow in the fourth. In the action-packed fifth, Sidorenko was the aggressor in the first minute, but Ikehara retaliated hard in the second minute, only to find himself reeling to the ropes from solid combos in the closing seconds.

Ikehara dominated the sixth, when Sidorenko took a rest and looked content to cover himself up with his tight guard. In the seventh, Sidorenko proved more ringwise, landing punches while blocking Ikehara's, and the game contestants fought on even terms in the eighth. Ikehara was aggressive enough to win the ninth, but only one judge scored in favor of him, as his combinations, despite the volume, didn't look so effective.

The 10th saw Sidorenko, 21-0-1 (7), almost topple the energetic Ikehara, 27-2 (19), with an overhand right, but he didn't follow up, probably due to fatigue. Nevertheless, the titlist still dominated the last three sessions to confirm his victory and successful defense.

In an interesting side note, Sidorenko left his alphabet belt in his hotel, so a member of his entourage had to hurriedly bring it to the arena. The belt arrived during the 10th round, in time for the postfight celebration.

Promoters: **Akihiko Honda's Teiken Promotions, Osaka Teiken Promotions**

(1-10-08)

Joe Koizumi

Ruslan Chagaev W 12 Matt Skelton

Dusseldorf, Germany: Skelton's journey from K-1 kickboxing to boxing has been an interesting one, but the 40-year-old was not quite good enough to displace WBA heavyweight titleholder Chagaev, 229¼, Hamburg, Germany, via Andizhan, Uzbekistan, at the Burg-Wachter Castello.

A former world amateur champion whose pedigree was established when he beat legendary Cuban heavyweight Felix Savon in 1997 in Hungary, Chagaev was by far the most gifted boxer Skelton, 254¾, Bedford, England, has ever faced. Last April, the unbeaten 29-year-old overcame an 11-inch disadvantage in height to outbox and outpoint the seven-foot "Beast From The East" Nicolay Valuev, who outweighed him by 90 pounds. Skelton progressed to the final of the K-1 Grand Prix in 2001, but this was a major step up from British and Commonwealth title bouts against the likes of Danny Williams and Michael Sprott.

Skelton showed in the opening round, however, that he would not be intimidated by the man nicknamed "The White Tyson." He used his weight advantage to lean on the titleholder and landed a good right to the chin on the inside in response to a straight left landed by Chagaev. His work may not have been aesthetically pleasing, but he was effective against his southpaw opponent and he retained the initiative into the second round, waiting for Chagaev to come in and commit to the punch before nailing him with right hands.

Chagaev, 24-0-1 (17), had the edge in hand speed, and while Skelton, 21-2 (18), utilized his jab in round three, the challenger got caught by two solid left crosses in close that tested his chin. Neither blow took any discernible toll on "The Bedford Banger," and he exchanged combinations to the head and body with Chagaev as the action warmed up.

As the rounds wore on, Chagaev began to settle into the kind of rhythm on which he has forged his reputation. His left hand collided with Skelton's shaven skull several times, with increased authority, and the British boxer's output decreased significantly. His punches lacked the kind of quality that Chagaev was able to demonstrate. Chagaev was displaying a talent for picking his punches well—though he never showed any of the excitement or one-punch power that made the real Tyson stand out in his short-lived prime years.

Skelton's chin absorbed some more left hands in the sixth before Chagaev unleashed an ominous series of left hooks to his challenger's jaw at the start of round seven. It was a brutal combination, but Skelton took it well and he even retaliated with a right uppercut before pushing Chagaev into a neutral corner. This level of resistance by the former kickboxer was not anticipated by the Uzbekistani or his team. Their expectation was that Skelton would crumble not long past the halfway point, but the Brit was still strong and willing. However, his tactic of leaning on the shorter man and holding around the back of the neck drew censure from Panamanian referee Guillermo Perez near the end of the eighth round, and a point was deducted from his total. He must have known now that a decision would be almost impossible to win, given that he was not winning any rounds clearly.

He may have outworked Chagaev in the ninth round, but the quality punches were being thrown by the Germany-based southpaw, who landed a hard right hand to the jaw just before the bell and closed out the 10th round with another solid combination of punches to the head. Skelton was tiring rapidly, but he withstood a sustained assault over the final couple of rounds and stayed on his feet.

Pierluigi Poppi (Italy) and Giuseppe Quartarone (Italy) both scored 117-111 for Chagaev, while Glenn Feldman (USA) made it 117-110. THE RING's scorecard was 117-110 for Chagaev.

Promoter: **Universum Box**
(1-19-08)
Brian Doogan

PHOTO BY MICHAEL GOTTSCALK/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Chagaev drives a right uppercut into Skelton's mouth

Steve Molitor W 12 Ricardo Castillo

Rama, Ontario: With a perfect 26-0 (10) record, it may seem strange to suggest Mississauga, Ontario's Molitor has been taken to school in his last two fights. But he learned the potential danger of lapsed concentration two fights ago when Fashung 3K-Battery dropped him for a flash knockdown in a bout he otherwise thoroughly dominated, and this time, Mexicali, Mexico's Castillo, younger brother to Jose Luis, tested Molitor's poise after a clash of heads ripped open a cut over the IBF junior featherweight titlist's left eye in the fourth round. Despite the leaking wound, Molitor, 121½, remained dominant for all 12 rounds of his third

title defense at Casino Rama, one hour north of Toronto. But for "The Canadian Kid," a noted tactical perfectionist, seeing his own blood inside the ring was uncharted ground.

In the end, the clash of heads only served to dial up a mean streak in the 27-year-old Molitor, and the game but outclassed Castillo, 28, paid for it by taking voluminous leather.

Castillo's strategy from the outset was straightforward. He operated from behind a probing jab and sought to land long right leads while digging to the body with the occasional left hook. But a pronounced difference in speed and ring mobility favored the southpaw Molitor, who jumped out of the blocks to comfortably take the first three rounds by circling his slower-footed opponent and darting in to score with crisp left hooks.

Although unintentional, the initial clash of heads came early in round four, and referee Sam Williams (USA) incorrectly ruled the cut was the product of a punch. With the left side of his face painted in red, Molitor attacked Castillo in earnest and fielded a jarring right lead for his troubles. Sensing his opportunity, Castillo, 122, followed up with several more clean rights to take the round decisively. But while competitive, he would trail on the scorecards for the rest of the night.

Cutman Lenny DeJesus admirably kept Molitor's bleeding under control for the balance of the contest, coping with a second cut on the Canadian's left eyelid in round seven. Meanwhile, Molitor went to work, spinning Castillo and chopping away with short lead left-right hook combinations and rattling the challenger at the close of the seventh with a right hook.

"I had to be little more precise because I had the blood flowing in my eye. It's something I never had in my life. But it's a learning experience every time out," said Molitor afterward. "I got hit with a headbutt. But that's the game, no complaints."

Against Castillo, Molitor opted for more heavily padded Grant boxing gloves after suffering a bruised left hand against 3K Battery. The gloves served their purpose, but a lack of power remains the most notable deficit in his arsenal. Molitor's shots came from every conceivable angle against Castillo, landing with enough authority to keep the Mexican respectful, but never threatening to end matters inside the distance. In fairness, Castillo, now 33-5 (22), has proven to have an excellent chin throughout his career, losing only once inside the distance (against highly regarded titlist Celestino Caballero).

Scores of 118-109 on all three cards were indicative of the control Molitor exhibited down the stretch. Cut over his right eye in the 10th, a tiring Castillo increasingly displayed ineffective aggression as the rounds passed, submitting to a virtual boxing clinic to Molitor in the closing two stanzas. Molitor proved most effective when pushing Castillo back, scoring with blistering combinations to the body and punishing left hooks to the head. Although the action was entertaining, the verdict tabled by Alan Davis (Canada), Jerry Jakubco (USA), and Joseph Cooper (USA) in favor for Molitor was hardly suspenseful.

Provided his eye heals in time, Molitor is next slated for a mandatory against Mexico's Fernando Beltran in April.

Promoter: **Orion Sports Management**

(1-19-08)

Alexander Munoz W 12
Katsushige Kawashima

Yokohama, Japan: Hard-punching Venezuelan Munoz, 115, barely kept the WBA super flyweight belt as he attacked ex-WBC titlist Kawashima, 115, in the early rounds and withstood the challenger's furious retaliation down the stretch to win a close but unanimous decision over 12 heats. Afterward, the 33-year-old Kawashima announced in the ring his retirement from the sport.

Prohibitive favorite Munoz, 28, didn't look as strong as usual, no surprise given his last-minute severe reduction of weight. He was slow and sluggish, and his timing was off. He often lost his balance when missing punches. This was his seventh time fighting in Japan, and certainly his worst performance of the seven. But despite the beltholder's poor condition, Kawashima could do no better than lose narrowly.

Munoz threw punches in bunches to take the initiative in the first three rounds, while Kawashima kept moving

PHOTO BY TORU YAMANAKA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Kawashima covers up as Munoz attacks

to avert the Venezuelan's vaunted opening attacks. Kawashima turned loose in the fourth, swapping punches toe-to-toe and landing left hooks, left uppercuts to the belly, and right crosses.

It became a see-saw battle from the fifth on, as Munoz and Kawashima mixed it up and missed the target with free-swinging rallies. Kawashima repeatedly hit the air with full force, his lack of precision costing him some points. With more composure and coolness, Kawashima could have caught the shaky Munoz, whose punches were a little more accurate than the challenger's.

There were some difficult rounds to score, but Munoz certainly held the lead through nine rounds, so Kawashima became desperately aggressive in the last three rounds. Unfortunately, he wasted his energy too much in missing wildly, while the tired Munoz retreated and clinched. Kawashima dominated the last two rounds, but it wasn't enough to overcome his deficit on points. Judge Jean-Francois Toupin (France) had it 115-114, while Levi Martinez (USA) and Tom Miller (USA) both saw it 117-111, all for Munoz. The referee was Steve Smoger (USA), who handled the rough battle well.

Former 105-pound titlist Hideyuki Ohashi, the promoter/manager of Kawashima, announced his fighter's farewell to the ring immediately after the announcement of the judges' decision. Kawashima, 32-7 (21), then picked up a microphone and said, "I really appreciate your long support and encouragement during my career."

Munoz, 32-2 (27), jubilantly said in the dressing room, "It was a tough fight, but I believed I was the winner as I scored better punches."

Kawashima agreed, "I did my best and I lost. It means that my power couldn't carry me to the world belt again. It's time to call it quits."

Promoter: **Ohashi Promotions**
(1-14-08)
Joe Koizumi

Omar Narvaez W 12 Carlos Tamara

Chubut, Argentina: Is nothing sacred? By defeating unknown challenger Tamara—the latest in a string of virtually anonymous opponents—Narvaez' people are now talking about him breaking the great Carlos Monzon's record for title defenses by an Argentine.

Monzon made 14 defenses of the legitimate middleweight championship of the world, while Narvaez now has made 12 defenses of the WBO flyweight belt. Aside from a win over Brahim Asloum, a win over Alexander Mahmutov, and a win and a draw against Andrea Sarritzu, the competition has been unworthy of title fights, and Colombia's Tamara, 17-4 (13), who'd lost three times in the previous 17 months, certainly fit that description.

Narvaez, 111½, Cordoba, Argentina, was in control from the outset of the fight at Nuevo Palacio Aurinegro, though Tamara, 112, Miami, Florida, via Sincelejo, Colombia, was certainly game. The 32-year-old southpaw titlist did what he needed to do, getting inside on the taller 24-year-old challenger, and there was no lack of good toe-to-toe action. The fight was competitive all the way, but Narvaez did enough to make the decision a formality (though the scores were perhaps a bit wide.) Ignacio Robles (Panama) had Narvaez winning a 120-108 shutout, while Nelson Vazquez (Puerto Rico) and Juan Carlos Palmieri (Argentina) both had it 119-109. The referee was Joe Cortez (USA).

Now Narvaez, 26-0-2 (16), is just two fights away from "equaling" the accomplishment of Monzon.

Promoter: **O.R. Promotions**
(1-25-08)

Hugo Cazares W 10 Kermin Guardia

Cicero, Illinois: Fighting for the first time since losing the world junior flyweight title to Ivan Calderon on a split decision last August, Cazares got the job done in unspectacular fashion against clever veteran Guardia, winning a unanimous decision over 10 rounds at Cicero Stadium. Guardia, a southpaw like Calderon, never let Cazares get comfortable, and the somewhat one-dimensional Mexican became content to apply enough pressure to win rounds without overextending himself. It was a worthwhile keep-busy fight for the ex-champ, but it didn't speak well of his chances in a rematch with Calderon, and it also didn't show him to be any better five pounds over the junior fly limit.

Guardia, 112, Miami, Florida, via Turbo, Colombia, came to win, but at 38 and a long way removed from his days as a 105-pound titlist, he never had much chance. Still,

PHOTO BY JOHN BOOZ/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Cazares rebounds with decision over Guardia

his guile was enough to make the 29-year-old Cazares, 113, Los Mochis, Mexico, wary. Cazares threw more punches and ultimately landed the harder punches, but not very many were landing flush. He had Guardia in a bit of trouble in round six, but as he followed up, Guardia, 37-8 (21) with 1 no-contest, countered with a good left hand and Cazares backed off. Cazares never really threatened to produce an early ending again after that.

The three American judges agreed on what they saw, with Robert Hecko and Gary Kruse tabbing it 97-93 while Nathan Palmer had it 98-92, all for Cazares, 26-4-1 (19). The referee was Gerald Scott (USA).

Television: **Telefutura**

Promoters: **Golden Boy Promotions, Eight Count Productions**

(1-25-08)

PHOTO BY MATTHIAS KERN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Povetkin wades into defensive-minded Chambers

Alexander Povetkin W 12
Eddie Chambers

Berlin, Germany: For boxing's circus act—the heavyweights—the venue seemed wonderfully apt: the centrally located Tempodrom, a major Berlin concert venue built in the shape of the circus tent that once occupied this site. While former world champion Lennox Lewis, who was part of the HBO broadcast team, looked regal at ringside, the men in the ring fell some way short, but with heavyweight boxing today, we take what we get. Chambers, 219½, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, underlined his merits as a defensive tactician, but he was poor offensively. Povetkin, 227¼, Moscow, Russia, struggled to penetrate Chambers' guard consistently, but he can fight better and, certainly, he deserved the unanimous decision victory that places him first in line for a shot at the IBF heavyweight title held, as of press time, by Wladimir Klitschko.

Whether he is ready for such an adventure is a different matter. Unquestionably, the 28-year-old Russian has the amateur pedigree. Like Klitschko, he is a former Olympic gold medalist, but he has had only 15 fights in the paid ranks and he appears to lack the experience required to topple the 6'6½" Ukrainian. He outworked Chambers, but was frustrated in his efforts to produce a suitably stirring climax and his power was a long way short of awe-inspiring. Probably, he needs more time to develop into a compelling contender.

Chambers, on this evidence, needs to be less the pacifist. In the opening round, he nailed Povetkin with a straight right that split open his defenses and followed up with a left hook, leaving the Russian nursing a damaged left eye. He enjoyed further success in the second and third rounds, making Povetkin's legs dip with another right hand, but his attacks were too sporadic. At no point did Chambers attempt to consolidate on his successes, and this allowed Povetkin to assume control, purely through his superior output of punches. Many failed to land, but enough got through, and the almost negligible return for Chambers, especially as the fight went on, gave the Russian a clear advantage.

Chambers, 30-1 (16), rallied briefly in the eighth and ninth rounds, winning them with solid combinations as Povetkin continued to struggle to solve the conundrum. But the American labored down the stretch and failed to seize the initiative, despite the urgings of trainer Buddy McGirt. It was Povetkin who dug deeper and hammered out enough combinations to win the final three rounds, even though he did not inflict any major damage.

The judges' scorecards may have been wide, but Chambers, who simply threw too few punches, had only himself to blame. Deon Dwarte (South Africa) scored 117-111 and Alejandro Lopez (Mexico) 119-109, while Phil Edwards (England) and THE RING both made it 116-112, all for Povetkin, 15-0 (11). The referee was Steve Smoger (USA).

Afterward, Povetkin was obliged to address questions about a possible bout with Klitschko, having won this IBF title eliminator. "I haven't had any time to think about it, but it would be a huge honor to fight him," he said. "The only thing I know is that I will be prepared even better. I have been bothered by a few colds during the preparation, but I will never step in the ring again when I am not 100 percent fit."

Promoter: **Wilfried Sauerland**

Television: **HBO**

(1-26-08)

Brian Doogan

Vic Darchinyan D 12 Z Gorres

Cebu, Philippines: The IBF junior bantamweight eliminator between Gorres and Darchinyan at Cebu Waterfront Hotel was dubbed "Now Or Never," and was to determine the challenger to the IBF beltholder Dimitri Kirilov. Instead, the result, a draw, caused chaos and confusion and nearly started a small-scale riot—while failing to produce a mandatory challenger.

Before the bout, darts were thrown by both camps, with former flyweight titlist Darchinyan playing upon his opponent's nickname, "The Dream," promising it would instead be "Sweet Dreams." Gorres calmly but confidently responded, informing Darchinyan the fight would be a "nightmare" for him. In the end, the fight was a nightmare for both teams with the bout ending somewhat controversially.

Filipino southpaw Gorres came out quickly, snapping out the jab and preventing Darchinyan, also a lefty, from getting started. Later in the opening round, though, when Gorres slipped, referee Lance Revill (New Zealand) erroneously called a knockdown, prompting a near-instantaneous salvo of plastic water bottles and coins to be tossed into the ring by the emotionally charged crowd. It was at this point that Revill, ruffled by the rowdy Filipino crowd, seemed to lose control of the bout.

In the next round, Gorres, 25, continued pumping the jab and using side-to-side movement to keep Darchinyan, 32, off track. During one exchange, the Filipino caught "The Raging Bull" with a short left hook, dropping him and stunning all those in attendance. The Aussie-Armenian rose quickly, and Gorres was unable to capitalize.

Darchinyan, fighting out of his awkward, crab-like stance, required the first few rounds to gather momentum, but by the fourth was landing more often. In the sixth, an accidental headbutt opened a gash on the forehead of Gorres; for the remainder of the bout, the blood flowed freely.

By round 10, Darchinyan, 29-1-1 (23), was clearly the stronger of the two fighters. Gorres, 27-2-2 (15), went down no fewer than three times in the last four rounds, two of which may have been legitimate knockdowns missed by the referee. The weary Gorres managed to hang on and finish the bout, but then came the anti-climax.

Judge Jonathan Davis (Philippines) had it 114-112 for Darchinyan, judge Montol Suriyachand (Thailand) scored the bout 113-112 for Gorres, and judge Ces Perkins (Australia) cast a 113-113 score, rendering the fight an unfulfilling draw. THE RING had it 113-112 for Darchinyan.

Darchinyan's promoter, Gary Shaw, was extremely upset with the decision. "The referee has never done a world title fight outside of New Zealand, and I think the pressure of the hostile environment got to him," Shaw said. "I think it also affected the Thai judge and the Australian judge. The Thai judge scored the 10th and 11th rounds for Gorres, which were very clearly Vic's rounds. This sort of thing is bad for boxing! It's bad for the Philippines."

Promoters: **Ala Boxing Promotions, Gary Shaw Productions**

(2-2-08)

Scott Mallon

Edison Miranda KO 3 David Banks

Hollywood, Florida: The highlight-reel worthiness of a knockout depends on two things: the aesthetic quality of the punch landing, and the aesthetic quality of the beaten fighter's body crashing down. Miranda's one-punch kayo of Banks at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino was serviceable in the former category, but truly exceptional in the latter category, making it 2008's first serious contender for Knockout of the Year.

Miranda weighed a career-high 170½ pounds for his second fight since a kayo loss to Kelly Pavlik last May, and he appears to be wearing the extra weight well. Certainly, the 27-year-old hasn't sacrificed any of his power since moving up from middleweight. Banks, 169, Portland, Oregon, a contestant on the third season of *The Contender*, knew he needed to box, move, and avoid exchanging leather with the Puerto Rico-based Colombian, but despite his best efforts, he was only able to stay out of range of Miranda's power for about seven minutes.

The opening round was close. Miranda menacingly walked Banks down, but it was the 24-year-old American

PHOTO BY JAVIEL CENTENO/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Miranda blasts Banks through the ropes for third-round TKO

who may have landed the round's best punch, a chopping right hand. Banks circled to his right throughout the first two rounds, looking to avoid Miranda's right hand. Late in round two, Miranda unleashed a left-right combination, but Banks rolled with the shots and avoided real danger.

Early in the third, Miranda scored with a right uppercut to the chin and then a left hook that shook Banks ever so slightly. A few seconds later, Banks retreated near the ropes and Miranda uncorked a right cross that landed perfectly on the cheek. Banks pitched backward and landed with his lower back positioned on the second rope, his supine body balancing there awkwardly with the back of his head on the ring apron and his toes pointed upward. Admirably, Banks, 15-4-1 (2), reached for a rope and pulled himself back into the ring, but he couldn't quite make it all the way back up in time to beat ref Telis Assimenios' (USA) count. The fight came to an end at 1:15 of the third round.

"The best knockout I ever had in my career was against Howard Eastman, but this was close," Miranda, 30-2 (26), said afterward.

Television: **ESPN2**
Promoter: **Warriors Boxing**
(1-11-08)

Amir Khan W 12 Gairy St. Clair

London, England: Britain's star of the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens—where, as a 17-year-old, he audaciously pushed Cuban Mario Kindelan for gold in the lightweight final before settling for silver—Khan, 134½, Bolton, England, continued his progression in the paid ranks with an impressive points win over St. Clair, 135, Sutherland, Australia, via Georgetown, Guyana, to retain the Commonwealth lightweight title at the ExCel Arena.

By the end of this year, the 21-year-old prodigy intends to be on the cusp of a major title challenge, and this bout will have provided him with valuable experience. St. Clair, who at 5'4" conceded almost six inches in height and reach to his opponent, has never been stopped in a career spanning 47 bouts and 13 years. He has stood up to punchers such as the late Diego Corrales and Vivian Harris, and as recently as 2006 he was IBF junior lightweight titleholder. While St. Clair was moving up from the 130-pound division, his vast experience made him a good opponent for Khan, who showed solid boxing skills throughout and dominated the bout.

Having filled out physically over the past six months, Khan appeared almost two weight divisions bigger than his opponent and he won the opening round decisively by unleashing several flurries of hooks and uppercuts. Predictably, St. Clair, who was celebrating his 33rd birthday on fight night, took the punches well and continued to be durable throughout the fight, maintaining a high guard and moving with the blows as they rained in on him. Khan continued to be aggressive over the following few rounds, but it was a controlled aggression, which spoke of growing maturity. He will not be able to blast out everybody as he continues his rise through the lightweight division and, against St. Clair, 39-6-2 (17), he demonstrated an encouraging acceptance of this truth as well as a determination to win conclusively by other means.

He varied his punching and utilized his jab, but he also got nailed by some dangerous right hands, such as the one he walked into in the sixth round. But the more solid and effective shots by far were landed by Khan, who swept the middle rounds. St. Clair's only hope was to land a hammer blow on Khan's chin, but he was unable to summon up this kind of shot. Khan dictated and St. Clair accepted his beating, though he rammed home another right hand in the closing stages of the final round, to negligible effect.

The three U.K. judges, Mark Green, Dave Parris, and Mickey Vann, all scored 120-108 for Khan, 16-0 (12), as did THE RING.

"I knew it was going to be a hard fight and I knew it was likely to go 12 rounds. He's a strong, world-class opponent and he took every shot I threw, but I enjoyed it in there. It was a good learning fight for me," Khan reflected. "His plan was to hit me with one big punch, so I couldn't get bored or complacent and I had to watch for his head and some dirty tactics in there. It's another tough fight, and for these fights I always train like a challenger. All the training I've been doing as a professional is paying off."

Promoter: **Sports Network**
(2-2-2008)
Brian Doogan ■

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES
Khan breezes to shutout decision over St. Clair

 (Continued from Page 26)

"Mikey." He would climb into his own virtual reality world and be Jack Dempsey, or Floyd Mayweather, taking on Muhammad Ali, or Sugar Ray Leonard, trying to outslug Joe Frazier or Marvin Hagler, or even family friend Vargas.

"There were times Fernando and me went at it, and at first he'd always win, being him, and I'd be Oscar De La Hoya," Garcia said, laughing. "Then I started getting him. I learned more. I suppose it's the same thing about boxing in the ring right now for me. But getting in the ring just never grabbed my attention. I was always happy staying home and playing video games. I didn't like being at the gym every day. My father or brother never really forced me or I never felt forced to do it. It wasn't my thing. It was just there."

Garcia was an omnipresent dot on the periphery of the crowd at every one of Roberto's fights. He might not have been completely aware of what was going on, but he was there. And he certainly was never star struck.

"Kids and teachers in school would always ask me if I could get them stuff, like my brother's gloves, or get Fernando's autograph, but to me, they were just Fernando and my brother, that's it," Garcia said. "People would pay to watch them spar. I'd watch them train and do their thing. They'd take me to Vegas and I'd hang out in the arcade."

That changed when Garcia was nudged into that life-altering tournament.

"There was a kid around the same weight as Mikey who didn't have a fight," Roberto recalled. "Mikey said he'd box him. He stepped right in and did pretty well for someone who never stepped into a ring before. He knew the basics, but the announcer kept saying Mikey boxed as if he'd been fighting for years."

Garcia was hooked. "I got an exhibition medal," he said, "and from there, that was it for me."

Mikey had a natural style, though no thoughts of a professional career. His first non-exhibition amateur fight came when he was 14. Fighting deep into a Junior Olympic national tournament, he had other fighters and trainers wondering how long he'd been fighting.

"I'd tell them less than a year; they thought I was fighting since I was eight or something," Garcia recalled.

Dunkin, who has known Garcia since he was kid, feels Mikey's late start is somewhat offset by the surroundings in which he was raised.

"Being around world-class fighters like Vargas and his brother, some of that had to rub off," Dunkin said. "He saw what a left hook to the body could do, how effective in-fighting could be. When he started out as a pro, he looked like a 10-round fighter in four-round fights. He's young, but he acts like a man and thinks like a man inside that ring. He's way beyond his years in terms of development."

The 20-year-old is looking to build his resume and perhaps fight for a minor title belt sometime next year. He's finishing up his sophomore year at Oxnard College, where he's studying psychology and has twice made the Dean's List. His father and brother still maintain the same attitude they had when Mikey was young—a nudge here and there, but no overt pressure.

"Mikey is a little better than I was at the same age," Roberto said, who retired in 2001 with a 34-3 (25) record. "I want him to be better than I was. But he's also at an age where anything can change. He's in college and that's important to him—and to us for him to get his education. He has the potential to be a great fighter and a great champion one day. That's up to him. He's been very focused and dedicated to boxing. I want to see him fighting before 15,000 people on a pay-per-view show."

If there is anything Mikey would change, he sometimes thinks of what might have happened if he had started earlier.

"If I could go back in time and talk to myself," Garcia said, "that's probably what I would say, 'Get started.' Who knows, I might be a world champion by now, but then again, I've seen the wars my brother and Vargas were in, I might also be retired. Things are going great right now. Maybe I did start at the right time." ■

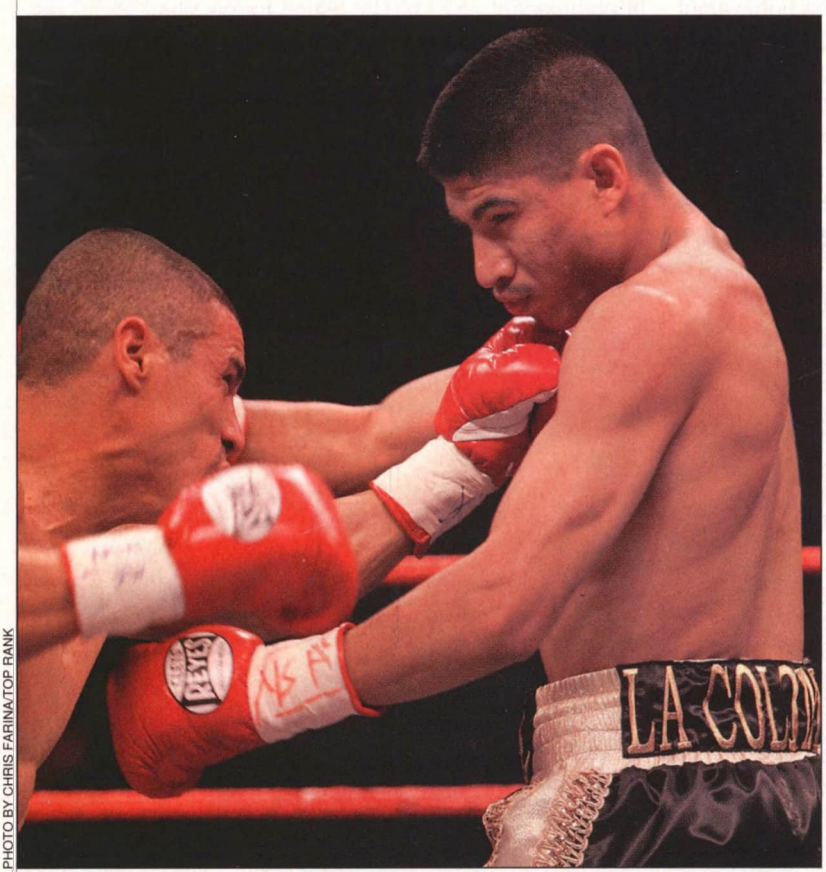


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Garcia wades in on Jorge Ruiz in an undercard bout on the Kelly Pavlik-Jermain Taylor card in mid-February in Las Vegas. Garcia helped himself with an impressive fifth-round kayo.

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WBC Light Heavyweight Title

Chad Dawson

Main Event 12 Rounds

Glen Johnson

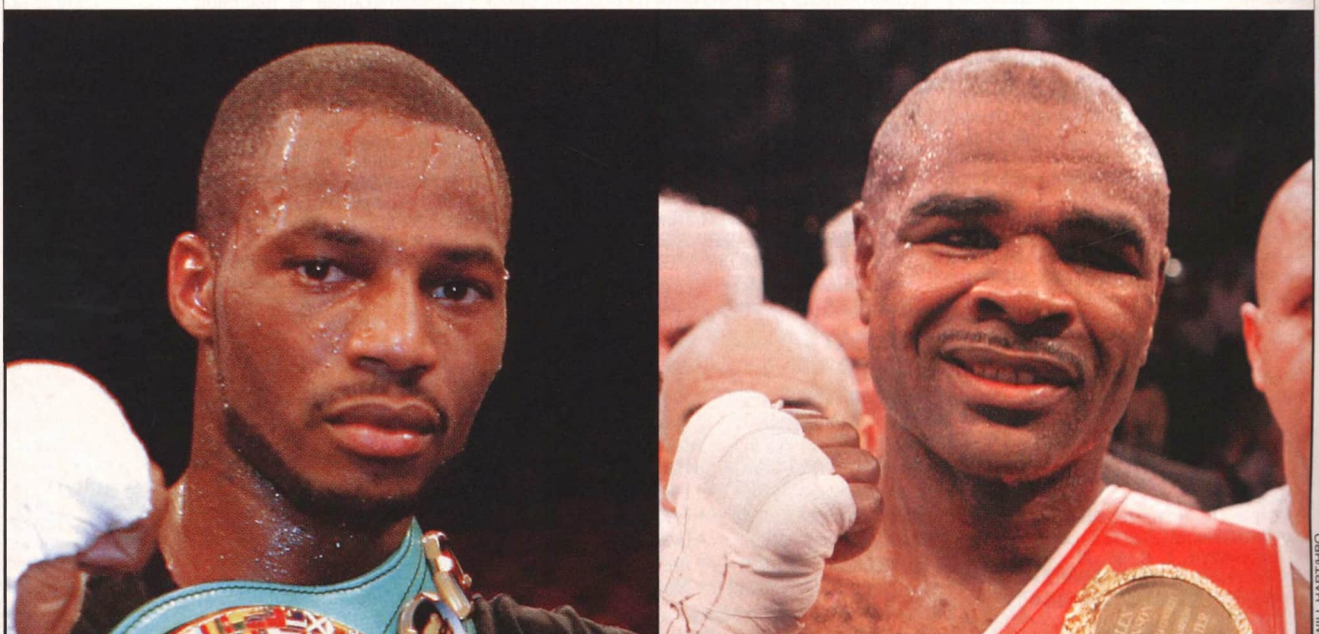


PHOTO BY DAVID MARTIN-WARR/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

PHOTO BY TIM BOOTH

It's very rare that old warhorses like Glen Johnson get third or fourth chances. It's just the way it is in boxing. They become too dangerous for any world champion or titleholder to face, simply because they present too high of a risk and not enough financial reward for the threat.

"The Road Warrior" has slogged through the early parts of his career in southern Florida, dotted with a few stops in the Caribbean, but it took 11 years for him to finally arrive at the point he always envisioned, winning a light heavyweight title in 2004, and backing it up with two fantastic defenses, stopping Roy Jones and decisioning Antonio Tarver.

Now Johnson finds himself with possibly his last chance to win a belt when he meets WBC light heavyweight titlist Chad Dawson, April 12, at the St. Pete Times Forum, in Tampa, Florida, on Showtime.

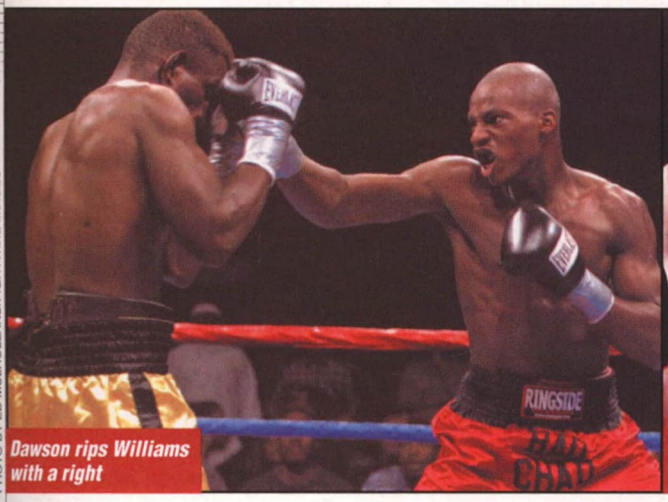
The Road Warrior looked good in a January tuneup, stopping Hugo Pineda in eight rounds. He showed he could still bang, notching the third consecutive win since dropping a split decision to IBF titleholder Clinton Wood in September 2006.

Dawson may enter this fight with as much to prove as Johnson. The defending titlist never capitalized on the most impressive victory of his career, when he won the WBC belt by beating Tomasz Adamek last February. Since then he's beaten two opponents who really had no right challenging for a title, stopping Epifanio Mendoza and Jesus Ruiz.

Chad Dawson

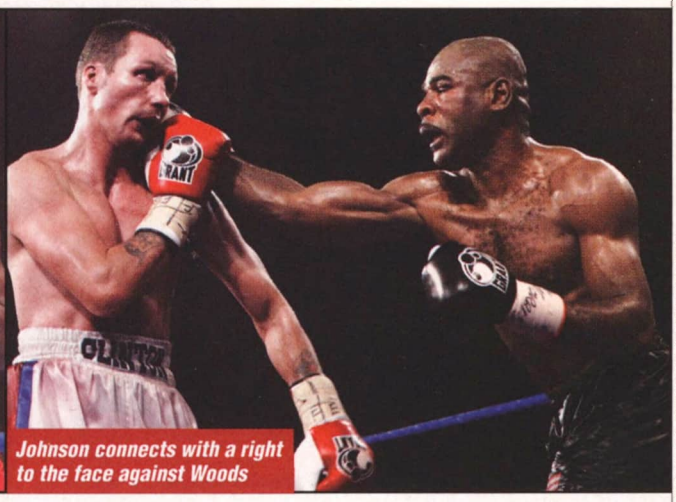
Glen Johnson

Record and World Rating



Dawson rips Williams with a right

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES



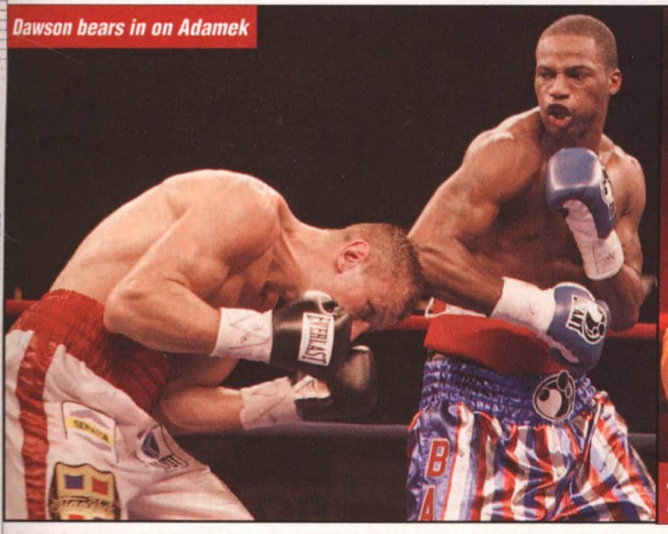
Johnson connects with a right to the face against Woods

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Is 25-0 with 17 knockouts ... Solid amateur background that included 67-13 record ... Won three-straight Connecticut Under-19 state championships ... Won the 1999 U.S. National Under-19 super middleweight championship ... Turned pro in August 2001 ... Stopped first four opponents within distance ... Served six-month suspension after testing positive for marijuana after a 2004 fight ... Won IBF belt in February 2007 ... Is rated fifth at light heavyweight by THE RING.

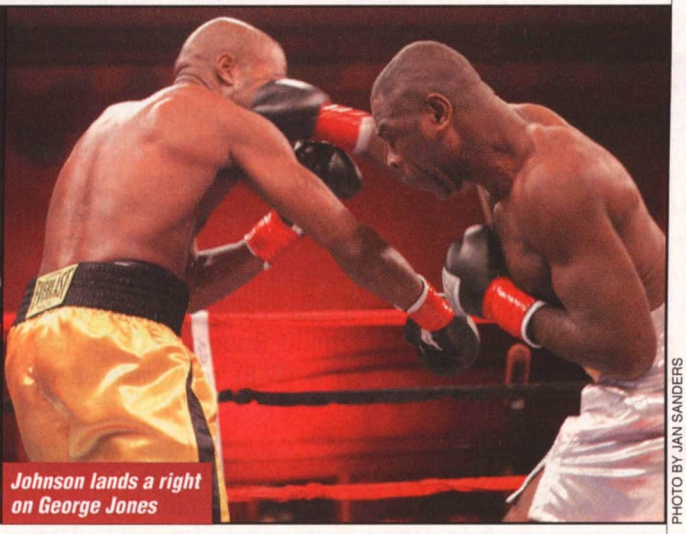
Is 47-11-2 with 32 knockouts ... Turned pro February 19, 1993, scoring a first-round TKO ... Toiled on Florida clubfight circuit first four years of career, going unbeaten in his first 32 bouts ... Unsuccessfully challenged for the IBF middleweight belt in 1997 ... Fought best middleweight/super middleweights in world from 1997-2004, before winning IBF light heavyweight belt in February '04 ... Closed stunning '04 with two sterling title defenses ... Was THE RING's 2004 Fighter of the Year ... Is rated fourth at light heavyweight by THE RING.

Age and Physical Equipment



Dawson bears in on Adamek

PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES



Johnson lands a right on George Jones

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Is 25 years old ... Stands 6'3" with a 76½-inch reach Sturdy build and long arms ... Uses size very well, muscling opponents inside and backing them up ... Has not shown propensity to cut or swell.

Is 39 years old ... Stands 5'11" with a 75-inch reach ... Has good-to-average hand speed, but only modest foot speed ... Credible power in both hands ... Very sturdy chin ... Excellent stamina ... Strong upper body.

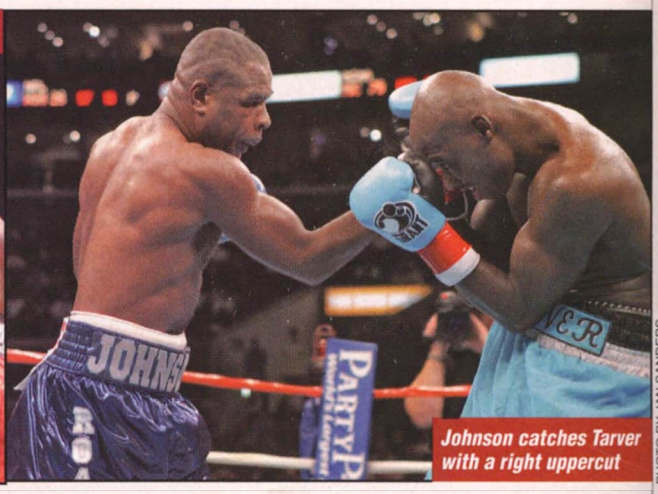
Chad Dawson

Glen Johnson

Best Weapons

Dawson fires a left at Ruiz

PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES



Johnson catches Tarver with a right uppercut

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Southpaw style, featuring long right-handed jab ... Thunderous left cross ... Strong bodypunches ... Very good finisher ... Punches from variety of angles ... Excellent boxing skills ... Combinations work well behind consistent jab.

Technically sound boxing technique ... Outstanding bodypunching ... Grinding, relentless pressure ... Vast experience ... Patience ... Punching accuracy ... Overhand right that can change course of a fight.

Previous Fight

Splashed Epifanio Mendoza in four rounds in the second defense of the WBC belt, in September '07 ... Mendoza took fight on 12 days notice, and Dawson attacked quickly, working well behind jab, and then connecting with left crosses ... Increased pressure in second, backing Mendoza up and staggered him near end of round with right-left to the jaw ... Ended the third round with Mendoza badly hurt and teetering, setting up the fourth, when he switched to a body attack that had Mendoza hurt on the ropes ... Referee Jon Schorle called a halt at the 2:30 mark of the round.

Started slowly against southpaw journeyman Hugo Pineda, who was fighting for just fourth time since '03 and hadn't stepped into a competitive ring since '06 ... Adjusted to Pineda's southpaw style by the second round, using his jab, and by the fourth, put heavy pressure on Pineda ... Pineda resorted to running, but Johnson finally caught up with him again in the seventh, landing a fierce left hook that floored Pineda ... Finished off Pineda in the eighth, forcing referee David Fields to step in and stop it at the 0:49 mark.

Quality of Opposition

Has recently scored a pair of stoppage victories against dubious challengers Mendoza (KO 4) and Jesus Ruiz (KO 6) ... Prior to that, experienced biggest victory of career in capturing WBC title with victory over Tomasz Adamek (W 12) ... Also owns victory over shopworn Eric Harding (W 12) ... Win over Carl Daniels (KO 7) elevated Dawson's status ... Fought a host of journeymen as a rising prospect, including Ronald Boddie (KO 3), Ian Gardner (KO 11), Jason Naugler (W 8), and Jamie Hearn (KO 3).

Has faced world's best middleweights, super middleweights, and light heavyweights, which includes victories over Roy Jones (KO 9) and Antonio Tarver (W 12) ... Owns wins against name opponents such as Clinton Woods (W 12), Montell Griffin (KO 11), Richard Hall (W 12), and Eric Harding (W 12) ... Faced then-IBF middleweight titlist Bernard Hopkins (KO by 11), now world light heavyweight champion, in 1997 ... Also met super middleweight contenders Merqui Sosa (L 12) and Joseph Kiwanuka (L 12).

Defense

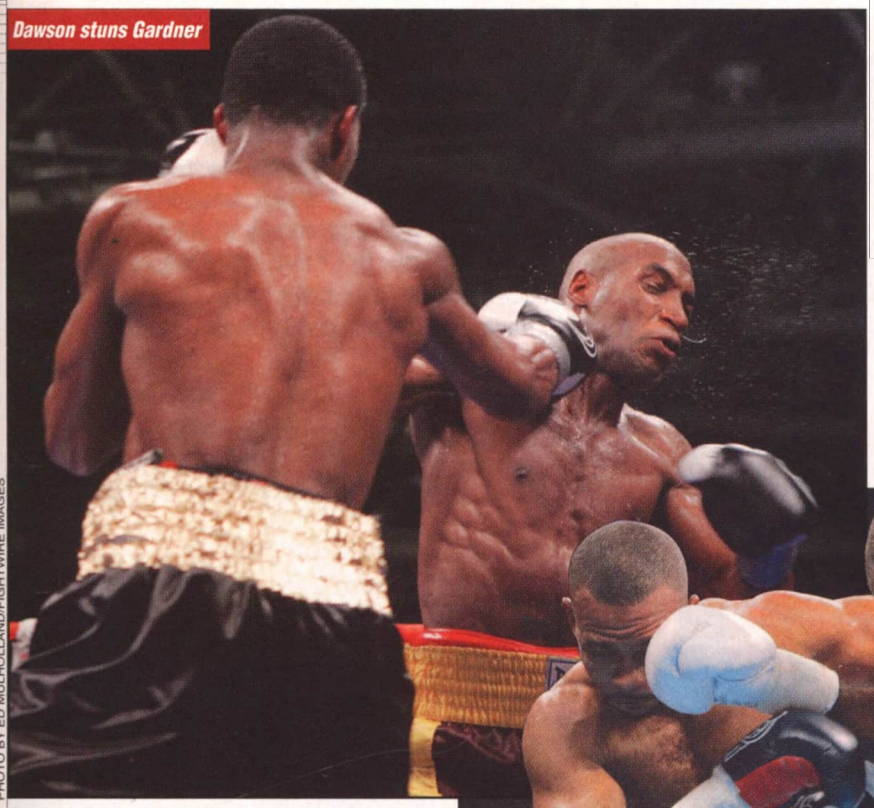
Busy offense and consistent right jab often discourages opponents from setting up or coming forward ... Has solid defensive skills, utilizing high guard to catch punches ... Good mobility ... Possesses impressive recovery skills, which he sued to come off the floor to beat Harding.

Active jab used to keep opponents off-balance ... Susceptible to lateral movement ... Doesn't rattle easily ... Despite age, still has legs to move out of opponent's striking distance ... Tendency to get caught in corners and against ropes ... Tough to penetrate when he covers up using arms and gloves.

Chad Dawson

Glen Johnson

Style



Dawson stuns Gardner

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Southpaw boxer who comes forward ... Throws variety of combinations ... Even demeanor ... Tactical stalker ... Busy puncher capable of systemically breaking down an opponent, as he did Mendoza.

Johnson buries a right into Roy Jones

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Pressuring, straight-ahead approach that often has opposing fighters backing up ... Methodical, yet aggressive ... Adept at finding openings in opponent's defense ... Cautious finisher when he has foe in trouble.

The Questions

Is he ready to step up to this caliber of an opponent, after having not faced anyone credible in over a year? Can he withstand Johnson's pressure? How will he react when he can't finish off Johnson quickly, as he did his two most recent opponents?

Is he still able to go 12 hard rounds? Or will he age overnight? Did beating journeyman southpaw Pineda in his last fight truly prepare him for Dawson's speed and boxing agility? Can he endure Dawson's bodypunching? How does he offset Dawson's jab?

The Outcome

Dawson will be leery of Johnson and his experience at the outset, nibbling and pawing with his jab. Johnson will try to force the issue, but Dawson, being 12 years younger and much more nimble, will use his mobility to get out of harm's way. Dawson, instilled with some confidence, may open up in the middle rounds, but will be content working from a safe distance on his way to winning a mundane, 12-round split decision.

May 1936

COVER STORY: "Louis-Dempsey: Who Would Have Won?" by the New York *Evening Journal*'s Hype Igoe, compares Joe Louis with others fighters he'd covered during 40 years on the boxing beat. Actually, there's no need to read the story to know the outcome of the Dempsey-Louis dream match—the punch line is given away by the subhead, which, in part, says that "The Manassa Mauler" would have "put the 'Brown Bomber' away in one round."

Igoe spends most of the lengthy article ripping Louis and praising Jack Dempsey: "Dempsey had the fighting speed of McGovern. He was a big 'Terrible Terry.' Louis and his methodical, plodding survey of an opponent, his belated finishes, wouldn't have disturbed Dempsey, because Jack wouldn't have been around to be disturbed. He would have been in the showers, the victor, inside of three rounds."

In the final paragraph, however, Igoe hedges a bit when he writes: "Just a matter of opinion, you know, so don't you fellows go haywire with letters and telegrams knocking me or THE RING editor for what I've written."

World Champions

(*for the period ended March 10*)
Heavyweight: James J. Braddock
Light Heavyweight: John Henry Lewis
Middleweight: Marcel Thil
Welterweight: Barney Ross
Lightweight: Tony Canzoneri
Featherweight: Freddie Miller
Bantamweight: Balcasar Sangchili
Flyweight: vacant

"Untold Chapters Of The Life Of Joe Louis" is written by Floyd Tillery, who visited Louis' birthplace in Alabama and interviewed some of his relatives. On his father's side, Tillery traces the fighter's roots back to James Barrow, a white plantation owner who also owned hundreds of slaves. On Joe's mother's side of the family, Tillery identifies Charles Hunkerfoot, a Cherokee chieftain, as one of Louis' ancestors.

There is plenty of politically incorrect language in Tillery's piece, the main focus of which seems to be to dilute Louis' identity as an African-American by emphasizing his white and Native-American blood.

Louis' mother, Lillie Barrow Brooks

"Nat Fleischer Says" touches on a number of subjects, including Jack Dempsey's White Hope tournament, in which the former heavyweight champ staged a series of cards in search of a Caucasian heavyweight to pit against Louis. Although he praised Dempsey's efforts for "keeping the game alive in sections where boxing has been as dead as a door nail for several years," Fleischer also noted that those "striving for a

place in the spotlight through the medium of Jack Dempsey ... don't even know how to stand properly."

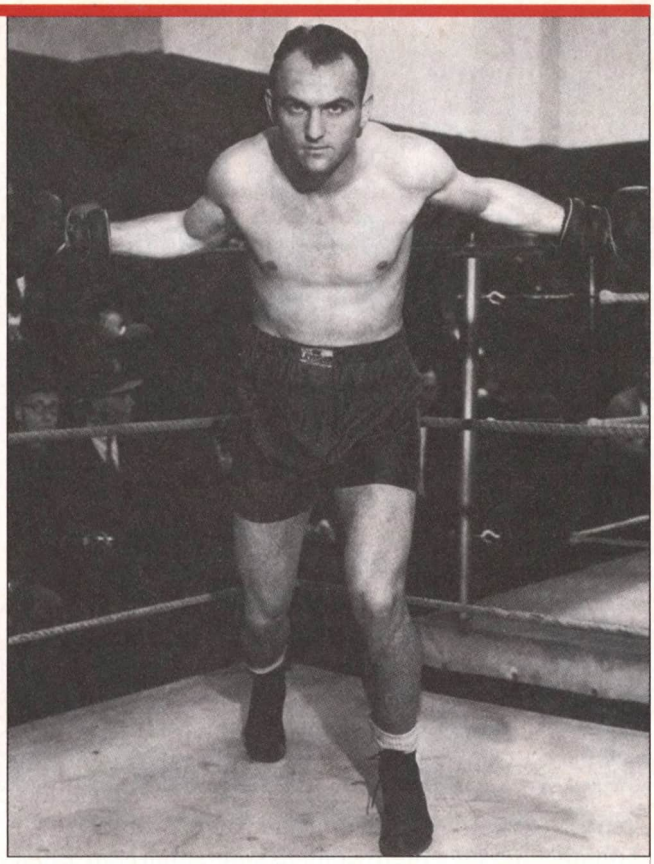
"The Value Of Swagger" by Ed W. Smith (who, according to a note under his byline, died a "few days" after filing this theme piece) concerning the relationship between a fighter's personality and the size of his purse.

Smith points out that if reigning heavyweight champion James J. Braddock were "of the swashbuckling, roistering, chip-on-the-shoulder, fresh, flippant type instead of what he is—well, it might mean the difference between mere thousands and a million!"

Smith lists John L. Sullivan, Jack Dempsey, and Max Baer as champs who had the sort of swagger fans love, and Jim Corbett, Jim Jeffries, and Braddock as champs who did not.

Baer had swagger to spare

"The Domini Gets The Duke" by Robert Edgren is about the heavyweight fight between Phil Brubaker and King Levinsky that took place in front of a packed house at San Francisco's Dreamland Arena. "Domini" is an abbreviation of "Anno Domini," Latin for "In the year of our Lord," and is used in reference to Brubaker, a divinity student.



Brubaker never lived up to expectations

Although Brubaker had Levinsky down twice en route to a 10-round decision and earned high praise from Edgren, the Californian went 4-5-1 in his next 10 bouts, with three of the losses via kayo, and never lived up to expectations. Brubaker retired in 1942 with a 27-8-1 (18) record.

"Broadcast From New York" by Eddie Borden highlights featherweight champion Freddie Miller, who defended the 126-pound title twice in less than a month. First, Miller won a 12-round decision over Johnny Pena in Seattle, Washington, and then outpointed Petey Sarron in Coral Gables, Florida. Sarron fought well enough to get a rematch, and took the title from Miller via 15-round decision a few months later.

Borden also noted that Mickey Walker had opened a new restaurant opposite Madison Square Garden called "The Toy Bulldog Tavern."

"News And Gossip From Boston" features Doc Almy's account of former heavyweight champion Jack Sharkey's 10-round decision loss to local light heavyweight Tony Shucco at the Boston Garden.

According to Almy, Sharkey "demonstrated that he has a few more fights left in him when it comes to facing boxers who cannot hit hard, or slow moving sluggers lacking in glove skill and ring generalship."

Three fights later, Sharkey ran into somebody who was neither, when Joe Louis knocked him out in the third round. Sharkey never fought again. ■

By Margaret Goodman, M.D.

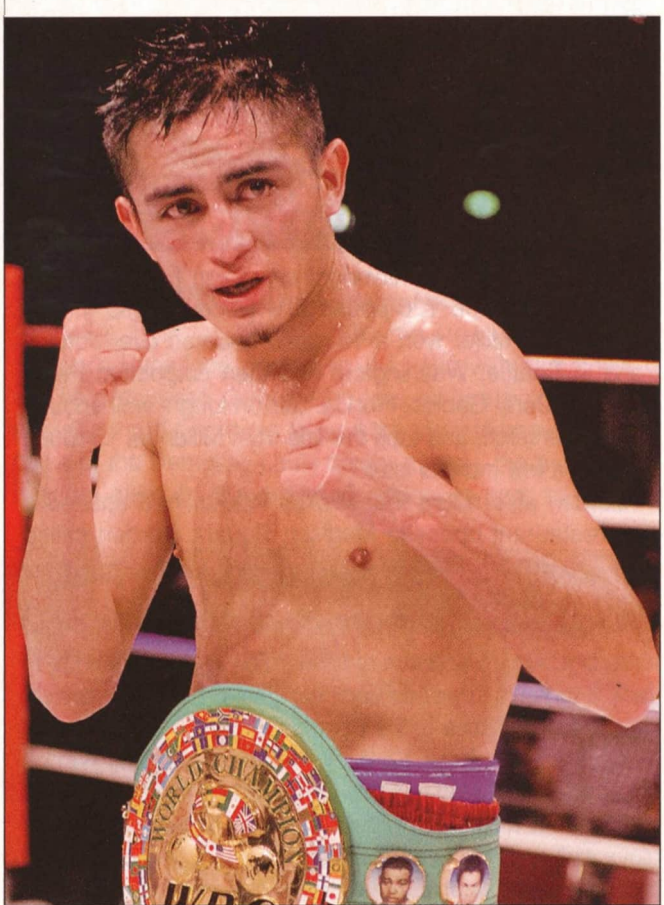
Can The Selection Of Fight Officials Affect Fairness?

Whether you like it or not, when Joe Calzaghe steps in a Las Vegas ring to challenge light heavyweight champion Bernard Hopkins this April, more than their fists will determine the outcome. What commonly escapes attention is the process of assigning officials.

Is the current process fair? Furthermore, what criteria are used, and, just as importantly, who has input?

High-profile boxing matches have often included veiled discussions about the assignment of officials, but unless there is a firestorm of controversy, the selection process is seldom questioned. Control is the name of the game, and promoters, fighters' camps, sanctioning bodies, and commissions all want input.

In 1999, when Oscar De La Hoya lost a close Las Vegas decision to Felix Trinidad, rumors swirled that Trinidad Sr. and then-Commission Chairman Elias Ghanem discussed officials at a private luncheon held weeks before the contest.



Did the WBC save Lopez from a TKO loss in his fight with Naoki Matsuda?

This type of meeting is not unusual in Nevada. Former Executive Director Marc Ratner would juggle suggestions from all sides. Most of the time the most appropriate officials were chosen, but along the way, unfounded prejudices have entered into the equation.

The commission continues to acquiesce to select promoters. For years, the Nevada State Athletic Commission wouldn't attempt to assign universally respected judge Jerry Roth to a Top Rank main event after his score made the difference in De La Hoya-Trinidad. This is not an isolated case. Referee Jay Nady was not allowed to work many high-profile fights promoted by Top Rank after the second Marco Antonio Barrera-Erik Morales fight because Nady took a point away from Barrera. Referee Joe Cortez was not allowed to work WBC fights for a number of years because the WBC felt he was too close to the WBO.

New York Commission Chairman Ron Scott Stevens admits assigning officials is a balancing act.

"You presume that anyone licensed should be capable to work any fight," said Stevens. "That being said, in a real world, some officials are better than others. Your obligation is to the health and safety of the fighters and to protect the state and the athletic commission. You distribute assignments as equally as you can, but keeping in mind this reality is not always true."

The question of how best to advance officials to higher profile fights until they have been adequately vetted is also important. Officials should not be moved up due to seniority alone. They need to be monitored and provided with feedback. If they are not able to handle 10-rounders after a reasonable period of time, then they should find a new hobby.

Associated Press boxing writer Tim Dahlberg believes that officials should be graded.

"Experience should play a factor, especially in major fights, but that doesn't mean a name referee should be automatically put on a fight just because of his name," said Dahlberg. "I think in some cases that has probably retarded the growth that's needed to build a deep bench of both referees and judges."

There remains an ongoing battle between the sanctioning organizations and boxing commissions regarding official assignments. There is not a month that goes by when a sanctioning body doesn't threaten to pull a sanction if some of their officials aren't used. Indiana Commission

Chairman Jake Hall notes his state was the victim of such a threat when Roy Jones fought Richard Hall there in 2000.

"The WBC said they would pull the sanction if one of the judges was not replaced by a WBC official," recalled Hall. "Our then-chairman met with them and acquiesced. I would have said, 'Let them pull the sanction.'"

Once a title fight is made, the sanctioning body will forward a list of approved officials to the commission. But how do officials make this roster?

Many experienced and aspiring referees and judges make yearly treks to sanctioning body conventions. Unless officials attend, they often lose out on lucrative assignments.

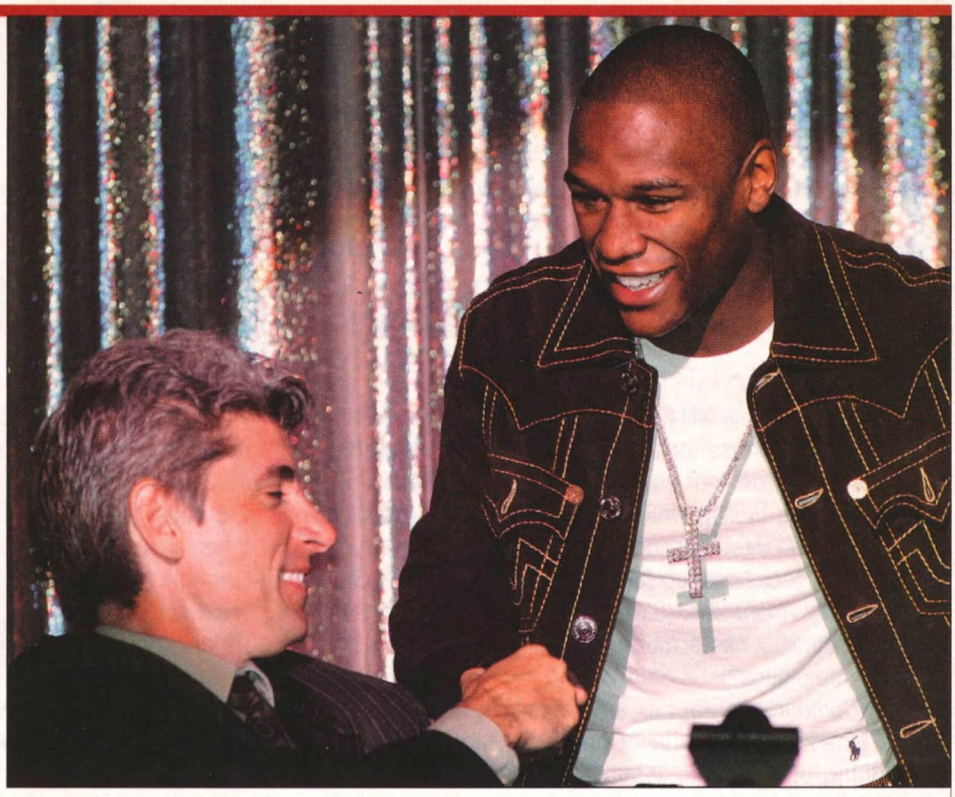


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Nevada commissioner Kizer, pictured shaking hands with Floyd Mayweather, declined to be interviewed for this column

While some input from the sanctioning body is expected, officials should not become members of sanctioning bodies, because if anyone other than a commission director affects official assignments, fairness can be compromised. For example, the WBC featherweight title eliminator between Rudy Lopez (Mexico) and Naoki Matsuda (Japan) took place in Cancun, Mexico, on December 15, 2007, with two Mexican judges, a Canadian judge, and a U.S. referee. Lopez was cut from a punch in round five. The cut was worsened in round eight and the fight was stopped on recommendation of the ringside physician. With the knowledge that Lopez was ahead on the scorecards, a representative from the Mexico-based WBC, Mauricio Sulaiman, entered the ring and argued with Cole that the cut was from a headbutt and that he should proceed to the scorecards. Cole refused. Nevertheless, with no hearing, the Cancun Boxing Commission declared the bout a "no contest." Therefore, in essence, the WBC voided Matsuda's technical knockout win.

Promoters are well aware which referees are prone to take points away, miss low blows, or allow competitors to fight on the inside. Moreover, judges' performance statistics are reviewed as carefully as a gambler scours the *Daily Racing Form*.

Stevens will accept a promoter or manager's grievance concerning an official if they have a legitimate reason. "It can't be if the official had a score they didn't agree with," he said. "It has to be that it would create a controversy if that individual officiated."

Bob Goodman, of Don King Productions, notes that King will never enter into discussions about fight officials. "We don't even want to know the officials," said Goodman. "It could be another reason to draw us into controversy."

This isn't true for all promoters. Hall recently had a promoter call a referee in neighboring Illinois to ask if he would be available for his Indiana fight.

"We told him, 'We are not using this guy.'"

"When one person makes all the decisions and the commission rubber stamps it, this is rife with the perception of undue influence," said Dr. Flip Homansky, former member of the NSAC. "All decisions should be made by the Executive Director and a commission representative, and then proceed to the full commission if necessary. All input should be in writing, not shadowy conversation."

During his tenure with the Nevada commission, Homansky instituted such a process, but not much has changed. As it now stands, Nevada official assignments will appear on a commission agenda for discussion. However, the pool of judges, referees, and doctors has been watered down to a palatable few already agreed upon by select outside parties.

This isn't a perfect world, but boxing is a sport of perception, and perception is reality irrespective of its validity. Officials should not have the wrath of a sanctioning body or promoter in the back of their mind. But they do. They should receive assignments based on merit, not equality, and not because they give a particular athlete an edge. The process should be transparent and legitimately open to the public so that the choice of officials will not be a factor in a win or loss.

THE RING contacted current Nevada Executive Director Keith Kizer for comment, but he declined to be interviewed on this subject. ■

By Jim Bagg

A Dose Of Reality For The Contender

Regular readers will note that the Baggarooney has the same fondness for so-called "reality TV" shows that the average four-year-old has for lima beans. But because he's a boxing writer, the Baggdorfer has dutifully trudged through three seasons of *The Contender*, and even watched the occasional episode of *Dancing With The Stars* and *Celebrity Apprentice*. (Side note: Is it possible that Gene Simmons actually has a more perplexing head of hair than Donald Trump does?)

The Contender is not half as entertaining to watch as a typical time-killing four-rounder on *Friday Night Fights*, and the editing of the fights reminds the Baggnician of bad porno—the same shots repeated from multiple angles, cheesy music filling the air, the random interspersing of slo-mo. Sugar Ray Leonard just needs to grow a bushy mustache next season and the show will have itself an NC-17 rating.

Nevertheless, the Baggmeister must admit that *The Contender* has become a part of the fabric of boxing in the year 2008. A lot of people watch it week in and week out. It's turned many thousands of non-boxing fans on to the sport. And, importantly, it's become the perfect way to build up a second-rate (or lower) fighter and earn him opportunities as a no-hope opponent against one of the sport's true superstars.

Peter Manfredo, the Season One runner-up, got to be world super middleweight champion Joe Calzaghe's opponent. Sergio Mora, the Season One winner, was offered a chance to be then-middleweight king Jermain Taylor's opponent (unfortunately, none of his philosophy books could get him to understand what "a bird in the hand" means). In April, Season One semifinalist Alfonso Gomez is going to be Miguel Cotto's opponent on HBO. And the following month, Season Two runner-up Stevie Forbes is getting the dream gig, as Oscar De La Hoya's tuneup opponent.

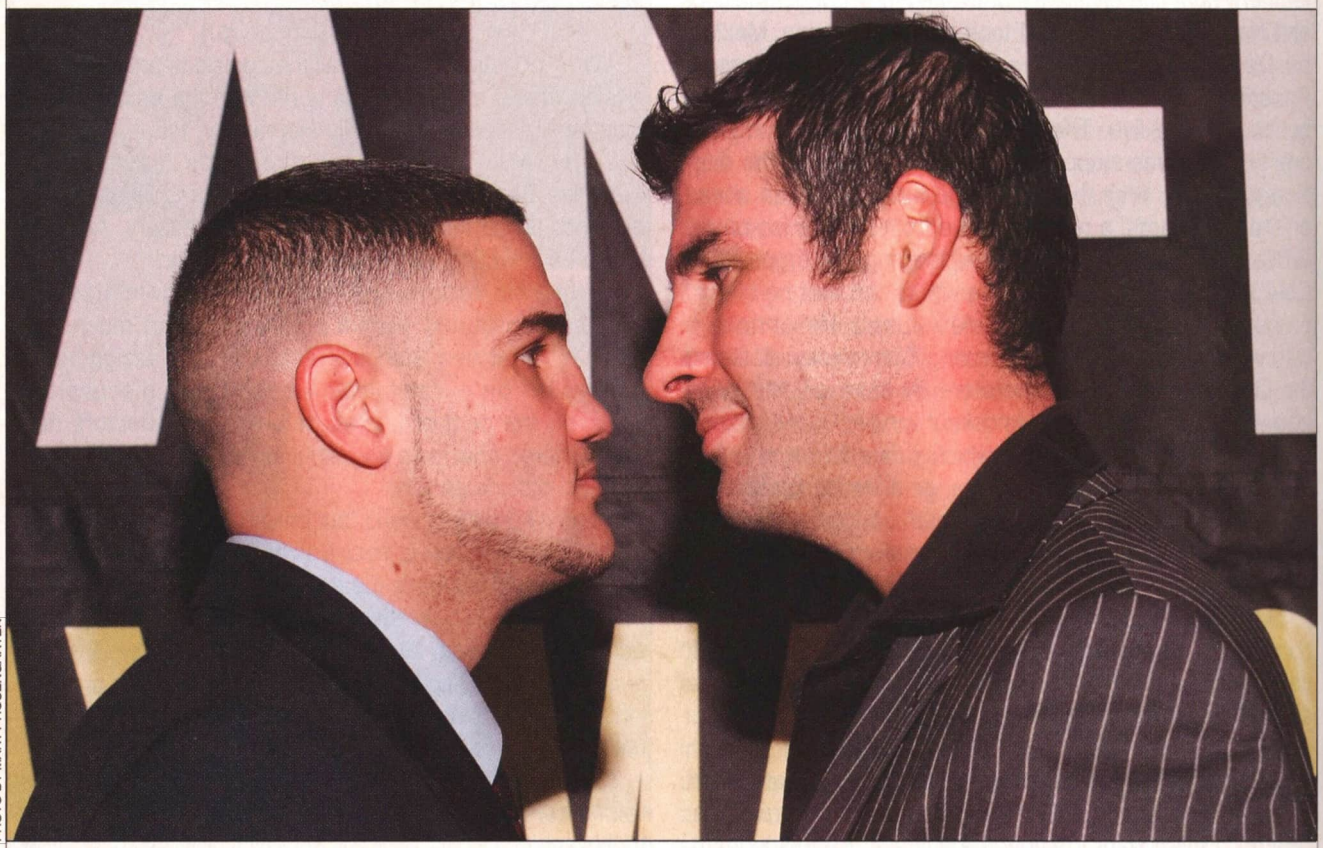
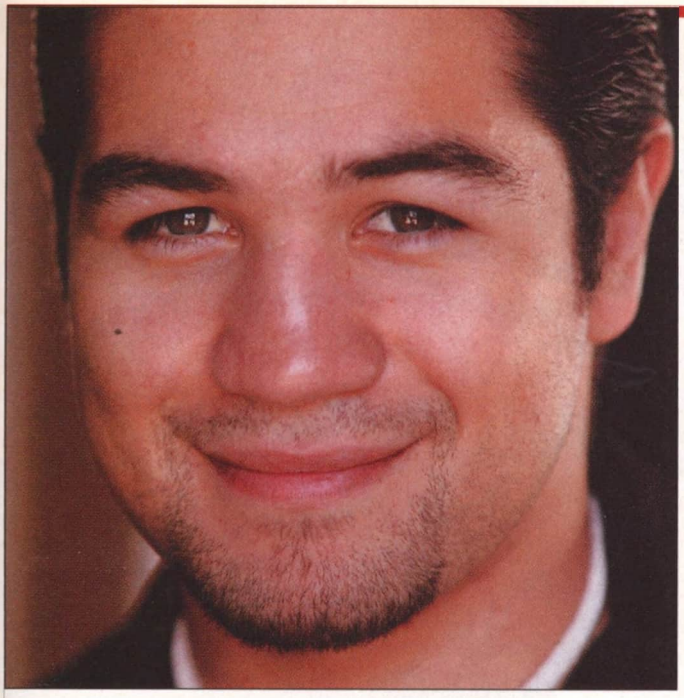


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Contender ***fame took Manfredo to a title shot, but then Calzaghe turned him into an opponent***



It's doubtful Gomez would not be fighting Cotto if he hadn't been on **The Contender**

If you look at the latest RING rankings, you'll notice that none of these fighters are ranked in the top 10 of their respective divisions. The only *Contender* competitor in the ratings is Season Three winner Sakio Bika—who actually got to play the role of opponent to Calzaghe before he even went on the show. So clearly, the title *The Contender* is an inappropriate one. Rather, it's time to re-name the show *The Opponent*. Why, the Baggman can see it now ...

"Sixteen fighters, all with a dream," Sugar Ray says as he walks through a shadowy gym, pausing occasionally to perform jump-rope tricks. "A dream of being like Luis Vega. Or Randy Milton. Or Marcos Geraldo. Or Kevin Howard. These were the hapless losers who were served up to me on a platter when I was a fighter.

"Some of these 16 fighters will one day earn the right to call themselves 'stiffs.' Others will proudly wear the label of 'tomato can.' Some may even reach 'trialhorse' status. But only one can be ... *The Opponent*."

Cut to Pepe Correa using the handpads to repeatedly smack contestant Jim Prelim across the face while Prelim's hands are tied behind his back. "If you want to be *The Opponent*, you have to be able to take punishment without being able to give punishment in return!" Correa yells. "You are a worthless maggot!" Correa continues, sounding more and more like the drill sergeant from *Full Metal Jacket*. "But if you dedicate yourself properly, you can be a well-paid worthless maggot! Fight through that broken nose and those two purple lumps where your eyes used to be, and show me that you really want to be *The Opponent*!"

Cut to Frankie Featherfists, spending a tender moment with his 400-pound wife and their 14 bratty kids in the locker room on fight night. "This is my big chance, Sweetie," Frankie says. "Can you pass that bucket of chicken?" Mrs. Featherfists responds. (A lengthy closeup of the KFC logo on the bucket follows; shockingly, we find out later in the hour that KFC is the lead sponsor of *The Opponent*.)

"I wanted to be someone," Frankie continues. "I wanted to

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Forbes lost to Grady Brewer in the Season Two finals, but the exposure helped him garner a fight with De La Hoya

PHOTO BY OMAR TORRES/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Golota and Mollo battle for phony belt

make something of myself in this sport. I wanted to be a contender. But since that's impossible due to the fact that I can't break an egg and learned defense by watching Ricardo Mayorga, the best I can hope for is to be an opponent. And I don't just want to be an opponent to guys like Joel Julio and Kassim Ouma, the way Cornelius Bundrage is. I want to be an opponent to the best around. I want to get my face smashed in by a fighter way out of my league, and make enough money to feed you and the kids for two whole months!"

Cut to Jeff Connor in the ring, engaged in a tug of war with Mrs. Featherfists over a drumstick. Connor wipes the chicken grease on his tux jacket, and grabs the microphone. "Welllllcome to The Oppooooooonent Areeeeeennnnaaaaaa!" he bellows, emphasizing all the wrong syllables. The crowd pretends to go nuts, and we enjoy quick flashes of the celebrities on hand, including Jm J. Bullock and the "time to make the donuts" guy.

Leonard wishes both fighters luck, and reminds them for the 38th time in the 43-minute broadcast that "every round counts." Marvin Hagler pops his head in and notes, "It's too bad the first two minutes and 50 seconds of every round didn't count for much back on April 6, 1987."

With both Prelim and Featherfists trained to take punches but ill educated on how to give them, we get five pornographically edited rounds of neither guy throwing a punch. Somehow, that doesn't prevent Sly Stallone, seated at ringside, from grunting, "Ooh!" every few seconds. At the end of the fifth round, Connor grabs the mike, the editing team cuts out the part where he reads the actual scores, and we learn that the winner is "Frank-ieeeee Featherfistsssss!"

However, because this show is about training fighters to be losers, Jim Prelim advances to the next round.

Cut to a heart-broken Featherfists hanging up his gloves, while we're beaten over the head with dramatic music. "I don't know what I'm going to do now," he says as he

PHOTO BY DONALD MIRALLE/GETTY IMAGES

Stingray winner Zuniga fires a jab at William Joppy back in 2000

The Monthly Mailbagg

You know what the Baggaloola loves most about running a "mailbagg"? The fact that by submitting letters written by readers, it diminishes the number of words yours truly has to write each month to meet the editors' quota. Sorry to say, dear readers, that you can do five percent of the work, but the Baggtastic is still keeping 100 percent of his paycheck.

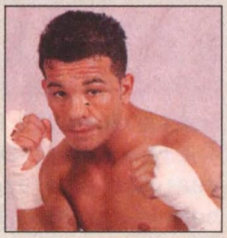
Baggfather,

Do you think Arturo Gatti deserves to make it into the Boxing Hall of Fame? Has he done enough to be voted in? I am a huge Gatti fan, but that's not the only reason why I think he should make it in. The Hall of Fame is just that, the Hall of FAME. And Gatti was famous. He helped bring back boxing to Boardwalk Hall and, in the early part of the decade, he carried boxing on his shoulders. He was a two-time champion and carried himself with dignity inside and outside of the ring. Your thoughts, Boss of Bosses, Don Baggaleone.

Paul Pucino
Providence, RI

Big Puci (as long as we're tying each other's names into a mafia theme),

Shocking, an East-Coast Italian who considers himself a Gatti fan! Before Baggie Walnuts reveals his stance on Gatti's Hall of Fame candidacy, let him just dispute two of your points. First, "Thunder" was not a "two-time champion"; he was a two-time "titlist." There's a big difference. His junior welterweight reign in particular was meaningless, as Kostya Tszyu was the one and only champ when Gatti claimed a vacant alphabet strap. And second, while Gatti did carry himself with dignity inside the ring, the "outside the ring" part is debatable. Boozing, partying, getting into fights, and fathering a kid out of wedlock—it ain't the resume of a saint.



Gatti already has the Baggarooney's vote

Anyway, is he Hall-of-Fame-worthy? Sure, why the hell not. By tougher standards, he shouldn't be, but Canastota has opened its doors to too many unworthy candidates for Gatti to be kept out. Ideally, the IBHOF should open a separate wing for great entertainers who weren't great fighters (and move Rocky Graziano, who isn't really Hall-worthy, into it). But barring the addition of that category, Gatti belongs.

However, like Goose Gossage, he should be made to sweat it out for a few years before getting in. After all, what's a Gatti battle without a little drama?

wipes the tears from his eyes. Suddenly, Oscar De La Hoya appears out of nowhere and whispers something in Frankie's ear.

"Oh, I do know what I'm going to do now!" Frankie exclaims. "Due to the continuing writer's strike, FOX has gotten so desperate, they're bringing back *The Next Great Champ*! See you all again in a few months on Fox!"

The Trouble With Trinkets

On the pay-per-view undercard of the January 19 Roy Jones-Felix Trinidad fight, we had the following belts on the line: In Alex Bunema-Roman Karmazin, it was the WBA Intercontinental super welterweight title; in Devon Alexander-DeMarcus Corley, it was the vacant WBC Continental Americas super lightweight title; and in Andrew Golota-Mike Mollo, it was the WBA Fedelatin heavyweight title. Yes, that's right, we had a white guy from Poland and a white guy from Chicago fighting in New York for a belt that's somehow supposed to be tied in with a Latin theme. (Not to mention, Mollo won the vacant Fedelatin title against everyone's favorite Hispanic hero, Kevin McBride.)

Here's the question: Is anyone stupid enough to believe that any of those ridiculous belts helped sell one single ticket?

Incredibly, a few days later, the Associated Press ran a story announcing the signing of Bernard Hopkins vs. Joe Calzaghe and called it a "non-title bout."

Welcome to bizarro world, people: Down is up, up is down, Jose Sulaiman is a great friend of boxing, and Roy Jones is still the best fighter alive.

And The Stingray Goes To ...

Fernando Zuniga, who proved in February that it's better to be the lesser of the Ecuadorian Zuniga brother combination than it is to be the lesser of the Puerto Rican DeLeon father-son combination.

Zuniga, 26-9 (20) coming into the fight, will never be as good as his younger brother Fulgencio, a legitimate contender at super middleweight who once knocked down Kelly Pavlik. But he's apparently better than Carlos DeLeon Jr., whose 19-1-2 (12) record made him look a lot more dangerous than he actually is. Despite sharing the same name as his former cruiserweight titlist father, he doesn't share the same skills, and Zuniga dropped DeLeon late in the seventh round to secure an eight-round decision and hand him his second loss.

Frankly, being a (insert former champ's name here) Jr. isn't all it's cracked up to be. Just a few weeks before DeLeon suffered this upset loss, Alfredo Escalera Jr. got beaten by a novice, and Wilfredo Vazquez Jr. got held to a draw by a total nobody. Plus, it's safe to say Jorge Paez Jr. is more clown than prince.

If the Baggstrocity can leave you with one parting bit of advice this month, it's this: Don't bet the next mortgage payment on any upcoming Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. fights. Stingrays seem to have a particular taste for kids like him. ■

Jim Bagg can be reached at Baggmeister@yahoo.com

[Come Out Writing]

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, THE RING, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034.

Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

It Should Have Been Pavlik

I just received my April issue of THE RING, and agree with most of the year-end awards, except one. I believe that Kelly Pavlik, not Floyd Mayweather, should have received the award for Fighter of the Year. I agree that Mayweather is the best fighter, pound-for-pound, but Pavlik has progressed more than any other fighter in one year's time. Mayweather was the victor in the two biggest fights of the year, but he was favored to win both. Pavlik, on the other hand, won three fights, all by knockout, and became undisputed middleweight champion of the world. Moreover, he was the underdog against Edison Miranda and Jermain Taylor.

ALBERT GUTIERREZ
Visalia, CA

Referee Steve Smoger signals that Jermain Taylor is finished for the night, making Kelly Pavlik the new middleweight champion and, in a good number of people's minds, 2007's Fighter of the Year. Among those who wrote to voice that opinion is reader Albert Gutierrez.

Happy Birthday, Champ!

I would like to wish Muhammad Ali a belated "Happy Birthday." Hard to believe he's now 66 years old. He had his third fight with Joe Frazier in 1975, which was 10 days before I was born. I always looked up to Ali, and he'll always be the world champion to me.

MATT DARKES
Womelsdorf, PA

Funny And Educational

Jeff Ryan's "Ryan Out Loud" column in the February 2008 issue, "Nightmare Scenario," was brilliantly sarcastic and at the same time as pinpoint accurate as a Floyd Mayweather right hand. I found it funnier than hell. I've also been educated about THE RING's Championship Policy and how the slimy alphabet organizations work. Keep up the good work.

JOHN ARMSTRONG
Troy, NY

"The Punisher" Is Punished

I would like to congratulate Carlos Quintana on his victory over Paul "The Punisher" Williams. I underestimated Quintana big time. In fact, I didn't think Carlos was on the same level as Williams, Miguel Cotto, Floyd Mayweather, and the rest of the top-10 fighters in the welterweight division. Boy, was I wrong.

Quintana must have watched tapes of Williams, because he knew what to do as he slipped away from Williams' punches and countered. Williams said it wasn't his night. I say if there's a rematch, Quintana will beat him again.

What confused me throughout the fight was Harold Lederman's scoring. I couldn't believe his 115-113 score in favor of Williams. What fight was he watching? Is this guy blind or what? I only gave Williams four rounds—at

the most! I am just glad the official judges didn't rob Quintana.

IVAN MONTIEL
latinoporvida2003@yahoo.ca

Better Than Expected

Now that "Bring On The Titans" is over, it's time for THE RING to acknowledge it was not a fight that would "make PPV customers question their sanity" (as was stated in his the February '08 issue's "Showdown"), but rather an entertaining fight. Sure, Tito Trinidad and Roy Jones are past their peaks, but the fight was better than the Floyd Mayweather-Oscar De La Hoya snoozefest, the Bernard Hopkins-Winky Wright wrestling match, and watching Marco Antonio Barerra punk out against Manny Pacquiao.

LEE MUNIZ
stdnxm@shsu.edu.net

Listen To The Doctor

I have been reading Dr. Margaret Goodman's intelligent and truthful column since THE RING first began publishing it. In the April 2008 issue, she explained why the World Anti-Doping Agency bans the use of Human Growth Hormone (HGH) and summed it up by writing, "It doesn't matter if the drug is giving an athlete an unfair advantage. If they believe it is, then it is cheating." Brilliant! Now, if all sports governing bodies could think like this, we could clean out a lot of unwanted and unneeded athletes. On the other hand, a couple of lawyers could probably stop a common sense approach such as this from ever being applied.

JOE SPEAR
Adin, CA

PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Roy Jones floors Felix Trinidad in the 10th round of their January 20 bout, which Jones won via unanimous decision. Reader Lee Muniz writes that the fight turned out far better than expected and chides THE RING for giving it a negative preview.

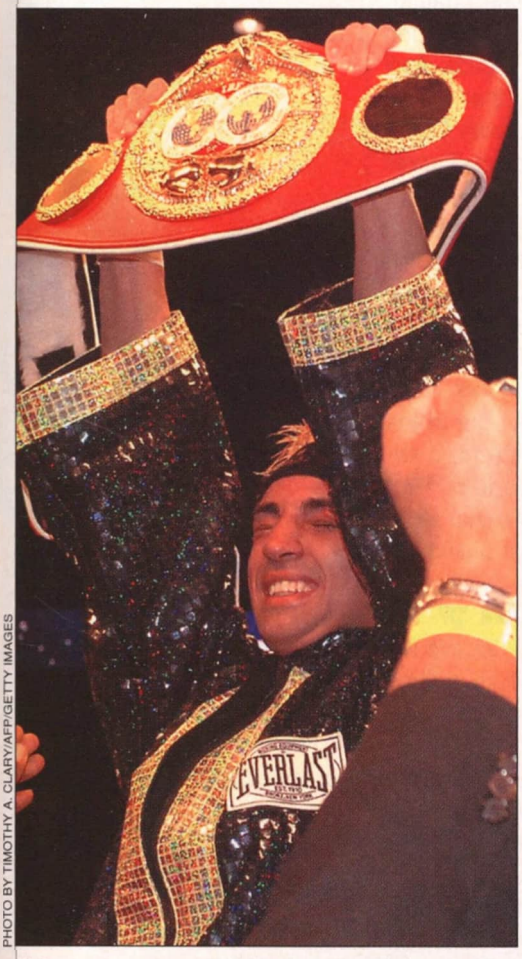


PHOTO BY TIMOTHY A. CLARY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

A happy Paul Malignaggi holds up the IBF junior welterweight belt he won by outpointing Lovemore Ndou in June 2007. Reader Anthony Medina thinks Malignaggi is overrated and that much of his success is due to having a savvy promoter make the right matches for him.

Where's Lennox, Mike, & Tommy?

I have been looking at the International Boxing Hall of Fame roster and noticed there are currently no places for Thomas Hearns, Lennox Lewis, or Mike Tyson. Surely, these three legendary fighters should be in the Hall of Fame.

STEFAN GREEN
Nottingham, UK

Editor's note: Fighters are not eligible for the IBHOF until five years after their final bout. None of the three fighters you asked about have met that requirement.

Malignaggi Overrated ...

Am I the only one who thinks Paulie Malignaggi is grossly overrated? Every time I go to an Internet boxing site or open up THE RING magazine, I see his mug plastered everywhere. What has this guy done to deserve such hype other then get his head handed to him by Miguel Cotto and barely squeak past Herman Ngoudjo?

I can't help but wonder how the careers of tough, worthy veterans such as Glen Johnson or Verno Philips would have turned out if they would have had someone like Lou DiBella guiding their careers. If I want to see a fighter with stupid hair and frilly trunks glide around the ring landing pity-pat punches, I'll watch an old Hector Camacho tape.

ANTHONY MEDINA
San Leandro, CA

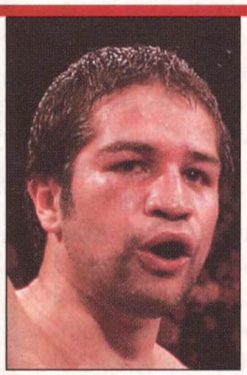
... And So Is Zsolt

In my opinion, undefeated light heavyweight Zsolt Erdei is overrated. In his last outing, he looked ordinary against journeyman Tito Mendoza. In fact, I scored the fight a draw. Zsolt is without question talented, but he has yet to beat a top pound-for-pound fighter. Zsolt has called out Bernard Hopkins and Joe Calzaghe, but he would lose to both. I would also pick Mikkel Kessler and Lucian Bute to put an "L" on his record.

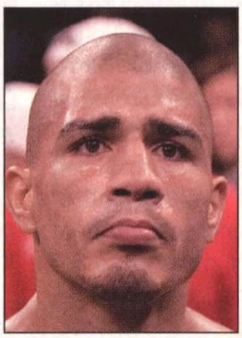
STEPHEN DONATELLI
Pittsburgh, PA ■

By Joe Santoliquito

Welterweights Rumble While Mayweather Waits For Oscar



Gomez (above) is a long shot to raise his hand in victory against the steely Cotto (below)



Welterweight world champion **Floyd Mayweather** is not going to fight until September 20, when he takes on **Oscar De La Hoya** in a rematch, but that doesn't mean the rest of the welterweight division has shut down.

Almost all the other major players in the 147-pound class are jockeying for position, starting with **Miguel Cotto**, who everyone would like to see fight Mayweather. Cotto is launching his 2008 campaign with what could be defined as a stay-busy fight, when he takes on **Alfonso Gomez**, the smiling cherub from the first season of *The Contender*. The match takes place on April 12, on HBO, at Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City.

Cotto, 31-0 (25), is coming off the most impressive victory of his career, a 12-round unanimous decision over **Shane Mosley** in November 2007. Gomez, 18-3-2 (8), enters the bout after a pair of signature victories over **Ben Tackie** and **Arturo Gatti** that earned him the Cotto opportunity.

What can't be ignored is that Gomez got Tackie and Gatti on the way down. Tackie was 2-2 over his last four fights before meeting Gomez, and Gatti was unquestionably shot, having been stopped in two of his last three fights before stepping into the ring against Gomez.

Facing Cotto, the WBA welterweight titlist, will easily be the biggest challenge of Gomez' career. Nobody Gomez has faced is in the class of Cotto's last two victims, Mosley and **Zab Judah**.

Cotto-Gomez won't be the only welterweight highlight of the night. IBF titlist **Kermit Cintron** will get a chance to avenge his only professional loss, when he battles **Antonio Margarito**, 35-5 (25), in the co-feature.

When Cintron, 29-1 (27), faced Margarito in 2005, he appeared woefully overmatched by the Mexican veteran. Cintron suffered a cut over his eye in round three and was knocked down twice in rounds four and five before his corner stopped it.

Cintron does have a legitimate excuse for losing the first Margarito fight. He was fighting after a nine-month layoff, having recovered from surgery on his right hand, his power hand. It may not have been the best career choice to step right in against someone like Margarito after the longest layoff of his career.

"The Killer" is also a much different fighter now under new trainer/manager **Emanuel Steward**. Cintron has honed his boxing skills to create a more balanced attack, not one predicated solely on his knockout power.

And while Cintron has appeared to improve, Margarito might be slipping a bit. He was outboxed by the rangy **Paul Williams** in July '07, but rebounded with a one-round kayo of shopworn veteran **Golden Johnson** in November.

LISTEN UP

England's **Clinton Woods** will put the IBF light heavyweight belt on the line against **Antonio Tarver** on Showtime's *Championship Boxing* from Tampa, Florida, April 12, in a card that will go head-to-head with Cotto-Gomez. Woods-Tarver was added to the main event, which pits undefeated WBC light heavyweight titlist **Chad Dawson** and former world champion **Glen Johnson**. It will mark the first time Woods, 41-3-1 (24), has fought in the U.S. since suffering a six-round stoppage to **Roy Jones** in September 2002. In Woods' last outing, he decisioned **Julio Gonzalez** in September '07. For Tarver, 26-4 (19), this will be his fourth fight in three years ... The cruiserweight division will be impacted by the winner of the **O'Neil Bell-Tomasz Adamek** fight, scheduled to take place April 19, in Katowice, Poland. The winner is supposed to meet IBF titleholder **Steve Cunningham**. Bell, 26-2-1 (24), a former world cruiserweight champion, lost the belt in a rematch with **Jean-Marc Mormeck**. Adamek, 33-1 (22), is coming up from light heavyweight, where he once held the WBC belt before losing it to Dawson ... The April 12 date seems popular, even overseas, where THE RING's number-five rated middleweight, **Javier Castillejo**, 62-7-1 (42), takes on THE RING's number-six rated middleweight, **Sebastian Sylvester**, 27-2 (13), in Germany. ■

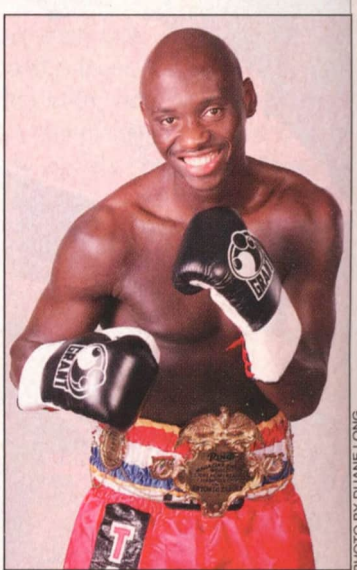


PHOTO BY DUANE LONG

Tarver is looking to reclaim the world light heavyweight championship, starting with Woods

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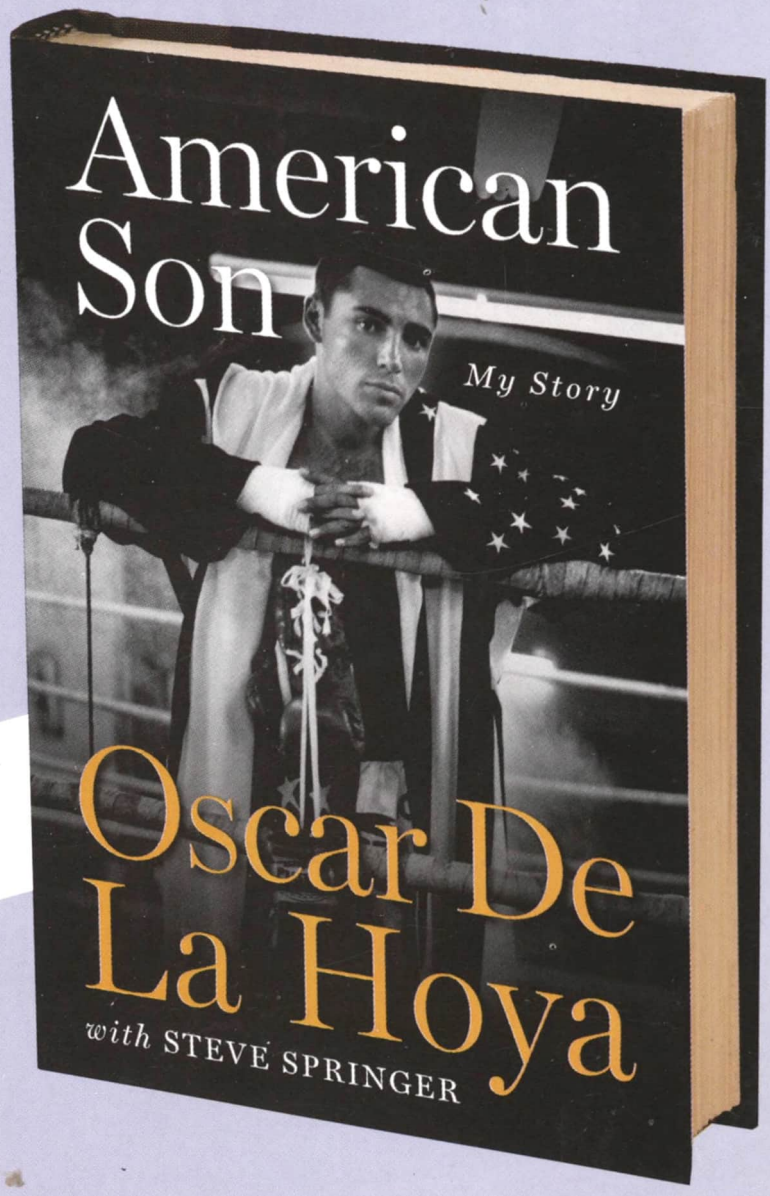

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